



**AFTER THE ELECTIONS**

**WHERE NOW  
FOR THE LEFT?**

**WHAT WENT WRONG WITH LABOUR'S VOTE?**

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**MOBILISE FOR SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE**

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**Plus full election analysis >>pages 4&5**

# Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2754 | 12 - 18 May 2021 | [socialistworker.co.uk](http://socialistworker.co.uk)

## BACK PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE



**DOZENS OF** Palestinians were killed by Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip at the beginning of this week

PICTURE: ALAMY

# ISRAEL IS A TERROR STATE

**ISRAEL HAD** killed at least 26 Palestinians in airstrikes on the Gaza Strip as Socialist Worker went to press.

It's part of a brutal attempt to stamp out Palestinian resistance—and reveals the racist, violent nature of the Israeli state.

Politicians in Britain will line up with Israel. Everyone who hates war and racism must stand with Palestine.

**>>Pages 2,3 and 16**



Protesting for Palestine

### SPY COPS

**Cops killed Blair Peach then spied on his partner**

CELIA STUBBS last week gave evidence to the Undercover Policing Inquiry.

Police killed her partner Blair Peach during a protest in 1979. Cops then spied on those who tried to get to the truth about how Blair died. Celia said they "abused their powers to protect themselves from facing justice".

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### REPRESSION



**Vile queen's speech sets out Tory agenda**

THE QUEEN'S speech on Tuesday unveiled the Tories' plans for future attacks.

They include further repression, targeting migrants and asylum seekers, and building support for military killers.

The speech included a host of bills, including the new repressive police bill.

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### DEPRESSION

**Mental health made worse by class and poverty**

DEPRESSION HAS soared—and if you're poorer, younger, female or disabled you're much more likely to have been affected.

A new report found that the number of adults suffering depression is double what it was before the pandemic.

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# RACIST STATE OF ISRAEL ATTACKS PALESTINE

As Israel launches a renewed offensive on Palestinians, Nick Clark explains the violence and the resistance

**ISRAEL'S DRIVE to force Palestinians from their homes is at the root of its renewed assault on the Gaza Strip this week.**

Israeli airstrikes killed at least 24 people—including children—in the besieged Gaza Strip on Monday night.

Many media reports presented the violence as the result of a religious dispute. They said there had been “escalating tensions” in Jerusalem, and that Palestinian fighters used an Israeli raid on a religious site as an “excuse” to launch rockets.

In fact, armed Israeli police have spent weeks attacking protesters resisting attempts to make dozens of Palestinian families homeless.

Israeli settlers want to use laws that privilege them over Palestinians to take over homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of east Jerusalem.

The homes were built when east Jerusalem was controlled by Jordan, and meant for Palestinian families that became refugees when Israel was founded in 1948.

Now Israel says the land belonged to Jewish people before 1948—and so Palestinians have to be forced out again.

It's the latest chapter in a long history of racism, violence and persecution meted out to Palestinians by the Israeli state.

As many as 850,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes in 1948 in a campaign of ethnic cleansing by militias that went on to become the Israeli army.

Israel's founders said keeping Arabs in a minority was essential to its existence as a Jewish state.

The western half of Jerusalem was captured by Israel in

1948—then it invaded the eastern side in 1967. It has occupied the city ever since, and claimed it as its own in 1980.

Despite this, Israel denies full citizenship rights to the Palestinians who live there—and keeps them under a system of violent repression.

It uses a range of racist laws to rob Palestinians of their right to live in the city, while encouraging Israeli settlers to move in.

Settlers have the “right” to take over Palestinian homes, but families who were made refugees in 1948 are denied the right to return.

Every year tens of thousands of Israelis march through the streets of east Jerusalem, celebrating the anniversary of the 1967 invasion, jeering at Palestinians.

Yet whenever Palestinians

## THE GAZA Strip came under attack from Israeli bombing

protest, they are met with tear gas and rubber bullets by Israeli police.

Israel's latest raid on the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem came on the day of the annual Israeli march—and after weeks of attacks on Palestinians resisting the evictions.

One of Israel's deputy mayors of Jerusalem, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, confirmed the planned evictions privileges Israelis over Palestinians.

“Of course there are laws that

some people may consider as favouring Jews—it's a Jewish state,” she said.

Nabeel al-Kurd, a 77-year-old whose family faces losing their home, said the evictions were a racist attempt to “expel Palestinians and replace them with settlers”.

Another, Abdelfatah Skafi, said, “It's the height of racism. Jews can get back their properties but not the Arabs.”

## Palestinian protesters right to bravely resist this brutal assault

PALESTINIANS responded to Israel's attacks on them in Jerusalem with heroic and defiant resistance.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have stood up against the evictions and the attempts to keep them out of the Old City in Jerusalem during Ramadan.

They have protested across towns inside Israel's borders in the West Bank, which is also under Israeli military occupation.

And, they have defied vicious attacks by Israeli police—including

raids on the Al Aqsa mosque compound on Friday and Monday that have left hundreds injured.

Nour Mtour told the Al Jazeera news website on Monday, “Snipers went on the roof of the gate at the mosque compound and began to shoot rubber bullets at everyone—women, men, everyone.”

“At the same time a huge number of police forces invaded from different directions. I saw Israeli police attacking the paramedics with batons who were doing their

job. They were firing rubber bullets randomly at everyone.”

Palestinians fought back. The resistance forced Israel to delay the court ruling that is expected to approve the Palestinians' eviction.

Fighters from the Palestinian group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, have also fired rockets towards Jerusalem.

Governments and politicians across the world always respond by calling on “both sides” to de-escalate, as if both Palestinians

and Israel are equally to blame.

Israel is the cause of the violence. Its siege and military occupation, enforced by one of the strongest armies in the Middle East and backed by the US, shapes every aspect of life.

Palestinians in east Jerusalem and the West Bank can't travel without having to pass through a gauntlet of military checkpoints.

Residents of Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods have come under increasing attacks by Israeli

settlers protected by soldiers. Young Palestinian adults in Gaza have spent their lives under permanent siege.

They can be shot and killed by Israeli soldiers simply for coming too close to the border fence that pens them in.

When Palestinians protested near the fence in 2017, Israeli soldiers massacred them.

Condemning them for daring to fight back is the height of hypocrisy. Standing with Palestinians means defending their right to resist.

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## Being an anti-Zionist is not to be antisemitic

DEFENDERS OF Israel have spent nearly seven years waging a sustained attempt to silence solidarity with Palestinians.

They have pushed the argument that it is antisemitic to call Israel a racist state, and that opposition to Israel is often motivated by a hatred of Jews.

Yet the evictions in east Jerusalem expose the racism at the heart of Israel. They show how Palestinian oppression has been built into the state ever since it was founded.

The assault on Palestinian solidarity reached a peak when Jeremy Corbyn was leader of the Labour Party.

Right wing opponents of Corbyn wanted to use his support for Palestinians to smear and discredit him.

But the arguments began in 2014, the year before he became leader, when an Israeli invasion of Gaza sparked a global movement of solidarity. More than 150,000 people marched across Britain against the attacks—the biggest protests in solidarity with Palestinians there have ever been in this country.

Israel's supporters wanted to turn the tide against the growing support for Palestinians. But as Israel's violence escalates, we can defy them with new mass protests of solidarity.

Monday's attack on Al Aqsa mosque during Ramadan

## Fight against imperialism to demand that Palestine be free

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden's spokesperson said the White House had "concerns about the escalating violence" on Monday.

Israel is the US's most important ally in the Middle East.

The US relies on Israel to defend its interests and has spent billions of pounds to make sure its military is the most powerful in the region.

Yet Biden also knows ordinary people across the Middle East support the Palestinians—and is worried that Palestinian resistance could spread.

Biden and previous US president Donald Trump have both tried to unite Israel with Arab states against their shared

rival Iran. But support for Palestinians among ordinary people means only a few rulers of Arab states have recently been able to sign "peace deals" with Israel.

As Palestinian protests spread, even those states that signed deals with Israel have been forced to condemn the attacks on Palestinians in Jerusalem.

Palestinian resistance is a challenge to the whole system of imperialism that props up dictators across the Middle East.

That's why the Palestinian cause needs to be a fight for everyone who opposes racism and war.

## Solution is a single, democratic state

FOR DECADES some people have said that the way to secure justice for the Palestinians is to set up two states in what is presently Israel.

Politicians have paid lip-service to that idea.

The two-state solution survived as an idea for as long as it appeared to offer Palestinian leaders the possibility of a state.

It also satisfied the need of the Israeli state—founded on the basis of maintaining a Jewish ethnic majority in Palestine—to keep Arabs segregated.

But the idea of a two-state solution broke down long ago.

In reality the supposed "peace process" that the two-state solution was founded on gave Israel a further opportunity to extend and solidify its occupation.

In doing that, it has left little land for an independent Palestinian state—and what remains would be completely tied and subordinated to Israel.

The Oslo Accords signed in 1993 claimed to pave the way to a Palestinian state.

In fact, this turned Palestinian leaders into enforcers for Israel, while the occupation steadily deepened.

THE OSLO accords strengthened the Israeli state

There are only two solutions to the present situation, and neither of them involve two states.

One is a new drive to clear Palestinians from their land. This is already underway and is backed by all the major parties in Israel.

The alternative is the only just, anti-racist one.

This is for Jews and Arabs to live together in a single, secular

state with equal democratic rights for all of its citizens.

Achieving this new single state means accepting the end of a state founded on ethnic division.

It will take a struggle by ordinary people across the Middle East against Israel, its imperialist backers and the Arab rulers who prop up US power.

And we need to support that resistance here in Britain.

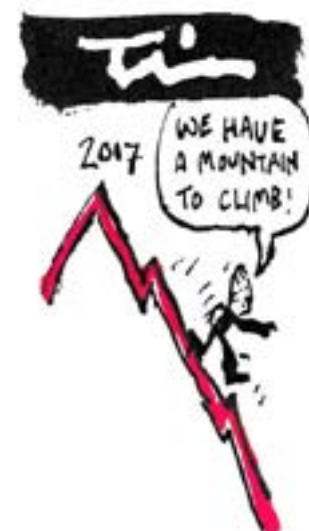


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# Tories celebrate election wins while Labour shifts right

by SADIE ROBINSON

**THE TORIES** are celebrating after making big gains in last week's local elections. Across England, the Tories took control of 13 councils and gained 235 councillors.

The Labour Party lost 326 councillors and the control of eight councils, including Durham.

Polling expert Sir John Curtice said traditional Labour territory in north eastern England had "been well and truly painted blue".

The Tories took Hartlepool from Labour in a by-election with a majority of nearly 7,000. In the Tees Valley, Tory Ben Houchen was re-elected mayor with 73 percent of the vote.

The area used to vote Labour. But Thursday saw a swing of 23 percent from Labour to Tory.

And it isn't only in the north east of England.

## Decades

Rotherham, South Yorkshire, has been a solid Labour town for decades. But the Tories won 20 seats—previously they had none.

And Sheffield has its first Tory councillor in the city since 2007.

Labour hasn't been wiped out. Labour mayors were re-elected in Doncaster, Salford, North Tyneside and the Liverpool City Region.

Sadiq Khan was re-elected Labour mayor of London—but with a smaller majority as Tory Shaun Bailey took 44.8 percent of the vote. More than 104,000 fewer people voted for Khan this time compared to 2016.

In elections for the Welsh Senedd, Labour did better than it was expected to. It held nearly all its so-called "red wall" seats that the Tories had hoped to win.

Overall Labour won 30 seats in Wales—half the total—and matched its best ever result.

And Labour kept control of many English councils. They included Liverpool, St Helens, Wigan, Manchester, Rochdale, Oldham, Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Coventry, Slough and Exeter.

But it lost Sheffield, Plymouth and Rossendale to no overall control.

The Tories took control of Harlow council in Essex from Labour. They also won Pendle, Maidstone, Cornwall, Nottinghamshire, Basildon, Northumberland, Dudley and Nuneaton and Bedworth from no overall control.

## Pandemic

And they took control of Cannock Chase District Council in the Midlands. Angela Rayner—sacked as party chair

## BACK STORY

Last Thursday's local elections saw the Tories gain mayorships, council seats and win the Hartlepool by-election

● Meanwhile Keir Starmer's Labour Party lost in places it's held for generations

● Starmer claims this proves Labour need to shift further right to appeal to working class voters

● Labour's left wing would be better off leaving Labour and fighting outside the party

was created in 1974.

It is unusual for a government to gain seats in council elections. And the gains come after its disastrous handling of the pandemic and as Boris Johnson remains mired in corruption scandals.

Overall the results are a damning indictment of Starmer's Labour. It's also likely a reflection that Labour councils, for decades, have not only failed to stop cuts but implemented them.

Many of the Tory gains came in areas that voted to leave the European Union, perhaps indicating that Labour's position of calling for a second referendum is still costing it votes.

Starmer accepted that Labour has "lost the trust of working people".

Former left wing leader Jeremy Corbyn was right to say that the party under Starmer has offered nothing but "insipid support for the government".

KEIR STARMER will use the local election results to launch further assaults on the left

## The Labour left is angry with Starmer, but pushes a failed project of 'unity'

LEFT WING Labour MPs responded to the election results by appealing to Keir Starmer to bring them back into the fold. Meanwhile, Starmer prepared a further shift to the right.

The Socialist Campaign Group of left wing MPs said the votes showed the failures of Starmer's leadership. Yet they pointedly refused to demand that Starmer step down.

Instead they called on Starmer to return to the left wing policies of previous leader Jeremy Corbyn—and appealed for unity.

The most they would demand was a special conference "where the leadership outlines its plan to turn this around and seeks the confidence of the party for it."

The Labour left argues that by simply returning to Corbynism, the party could seriously threaten the Tories as it did in the 2017 general election.

Yet their strategy is the one

that led to Labour's defeat in the 2019 general election.

Under Corbyn's leadership the left gave in to the right's demands to call for a second EU referendum—a key cause of Labour's defeat.

It also meant attempting a more "professional" election campaign that rejected the mass rallies as part of the pressure to stay within the mainstream.

Now it means rallying around Angela Rayner, who Starmer sacked as party chair, despite the fact that she joined in with his war on the left.

It also means championing Manchester mayor Andy Burnham as he tries to boost his own standing. And it means weakly appealing to Starmer for unity as he fills his shadow cabinet with right wingers.

John McDonnell said, "Keir Starmer promised to unite the party, and unless he does that

now and urgently, Labour will continue to flatline.

"It will require reaching out, listening to voters and colleagues, and widening the pool of advice he receives.

"Keir's got to be given his chance—he shouldn't be treated like Jeremy was, with constant undermining and coups."

Meanwhile, Starmer appointed Rachel Reeves—who said Labour shouldn't be "the party of benefits" and immigration was causing "bubbling tensions that could explode"—as shadow chancellor.

The Socialist Campaign Group say their choice is between staying and fighting inside the Labour Party, or giving up.

In reality the choice is between retreating from a battle with the right and propping them up—or leaving Labour to fight the Tories outside.

Nick Clark

## ANALYSIS

# Labour members—‘It’s not our party—we don’t control it’

LABOUR members have said the party’s bureaucracy ignored activists’ opinions in the failed campaign to elect Liam Byrne as West Midlands mayor.

Activist Carl Brown told Socialist Worker, “Liam Byrne’s campaign was the most lacklustre one that could be imagined. It was very top down in terms of the messages that were being sent out.

“The material sent out by the West Midlands combined authority had all of the candidates listed and their pledges, Liam Byrne’s was the only one who had no clear set of pledges. It was just a paragraph about himself really.

“He had no desire to engage with the grassroots activists.”

Another activist Andrea Bradley said, “A large part of what’s gone wrong is there’s a disconnect between the management elements of the Labour Party, particularly the top of the Labour Party and some MPs and councillors, and

the membership. So the experiences that the members on the doorstep are having just aren’t being listened to.

And they’re not being reflected in the policy—or lack of policy—that’s coming from the top. “People like Keir Starmer don’t seem to recognise that the membership are also voters.”

Andrea added that “It’s really difficult to be a Labour Party member now,” but that she plans to “stay and fight.”

But Carl said being in the Labour Party means socialists have to “contort themselves into quite difficult

positions” to campaign for candidates whose politics they don’t support.

“I think the Labour left is almost operating as life support to the party,” he said. “But if we dig deep and think about what that means, the old rhetoric about it being our party is almost meaningless.

“Ultimately it’s not our party—we don’t have any control of it.

“I would unplug the life support tomorrow. People should leave and focus their passion, knowledge and experience elsewhere—seeking to build serious grassroots movements.”

## STRUGGLE IS on the streets

# Greens gain but are limited

**THE GREEN Party gained more than 80 council seats in England and Wales.**

In Sheffield and Bristol the Labour Party saw its majority in the council disappear, as votes swung to the Greens.

Professor Sir John Curtice said, “These local elections appear

to confirm that the Greens are now able to win a non-trivial proportion of the vote.”

The Greens benefit from the anger people rightly feel about the lack of action over climate change and other environmental issues.

But in practice,

there are strict limits to the Greens’ radicalism. In councils they have offered no real opposition to cuts pushed by other parties.

And they look to arrangements with parties such as the Liberal Democrats rather than opposition on the streets.

# Fight the conspiracy charges

THE LONDON mayoral candidate for political party Burning Pink Valerie Brown was arrested last Saturday for conspiracy to commit criminal damage.

Conspiracy charges are extremely serious.

The arrest followed Burning Pink supporters spraying the Guardian newspaper offices with pink paint.

They targeted the offices because the paper had “broken its climate pledge” and ignored Brown’s campaign.

Burning Pink is headed up by Extinction Rebellion co-founder Roger Hallam. It calls for bringing down the government and replacing it with citizen assemblies.

Brown has since

been released.

The group also reported that the house of another activist Ramon Salgado-Touzou, who took part in the action, was raided by the police.

Burning Pink called a protest outside Islington police station and described the reaction to its protest as a “complete overreach”.

## Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

# LOCKDOWN EASES, BUT VIRUS HASN’T GONE AWAY

**B**ORIS JOHNSON has confirmed that the latest planned easing of coronavirus restrictions in England will go ahead.

From Monday of next week, people will be able to meet in bigger numbers indoors and outdoors. Pubs and restaurants can serve indoors and entertainment venues can reopen along with a raft of other measures.

The changes come as recorded cases and deaths from coronavirus in Britain remain low. There were no deaths recorded in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland on Monday—for the first time since July.

And there’s evidence that the vaccine is more effective at stopping transmission than was first thought.

It can be tempting to think that the worst has passed. Yet England’s chief medical officer Chris Whitty said on Monday that the “highly transmissible” Indian virus variant has “gone up sharply” in Britain.

The Sage group of scientists that advises the government said controlling transmission will be harder as restrictions are lifted. There is still a risk of a third

wave. “A variant which either substantially escapes immunity or is highly transmissible could lead to a very significant wave of infections,” Sage said last week.

And this wave could be “potentially larger than that seen in January 2021”.

As coronavirus rages across the world, ordinary people are paying the price. Official figures show around 4,000 people are dying of the virus every day in India. The real figure will be larger.

There are more than 10,000 new deaths globally every day and nearly 700,000 new cases.

Yet the British government has refused to back lifting the patents on Covid-19 vaccines.



**As coronavirus rages across the world, ordinary people are paying the price**

Pharmaceutical companies’ profits come before lives.

Governments everywhere have failed to protect ordinary people. Britain is no exception.

A cluster of cases of the Indian variant in Bolton led to surge testing last weekend to try and contain the virus.

The Tories know that lifting restrictions is likely to push up cases—and are already preparing to blame ordinary people.

So to hug or not to hug is a “personal choice” according to Johnson. And while people can travel abroad, the government is “advising” us not to.

The Tories will blame reckless behaviour by ordinary people if cases rise. But it’s the Tories who have been reckless. They’ve conducted a year of failures that led to tens of thousands of deaths.

The Tories should be preparing for a potential third wave. They should be making sure a properly functioning test and trace system is in place to contain any outbreaks.

They should be putting far more funding into the NHS, training extra health workers and paying them a 15 percent rise. They are doing none of these things.

# STOP FIRE AND REHIRE

**T**HREE QUARTERS of people in Britain want bosses’ outrageous fire and rehire tactics scrapped. A poll conducted by Survation on behalf of the GMB union discovered that 76 percent of people believe the practice should be outlawed.

Workers have been fighting back against these tactics that sack the workforce and rehire them of vastly inferior contracts.

There’s been an escalation in companies prepared to use the process. One example is Jacobs

Douw Egberts coffee plant in Banbury, Oxfordshire.

A deadline is approaching for those workers to accept cuts of up to £7,000 a year or lose their jobs.

It’s no idle threat. Big attacks on pay and conditions were rammed through at British Gas recently.

Unions demand laws that ban fire and rehire, and that would be a real gain. But it’s very unlikely that MPs will back such moves without much pressure.

A strategy to stop fire and rehire has to be built on winning

the disputes where it emerges.

It must be a collective fight. The whole trade union movement should offer solidarity to affected workers. Scottish further education lecturers stopped fire and rehire by escalating action.

We don’t need more failures seen at British Gas. And nor do we need proclamations that fire and rehire has gone only to discover that the threatened attacks have largely gone through by a deal.

We need to build a large and united fightback.

## Breakfast in



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## ANALYSIS

CHARLIE KIMBER



## Do election results mean class is dead?

**ELECTIONS IN Britain last week have led to announcements of the death of class and the end of a clear divide between “left and right”.**

Their demise has been proclaimed several times before, but now the calls grow ever more raucous.

For writer and journalist Paul Mason there is now a significant and electorally decisive section of the working class whose “politics are now dictated primarily by their identity, not their economic interest”.

Others suggest there has been a total transformation of the class structure of Britain.

That’s false, but it’s no help to ignore the reality of what has happened.

The Tories have skilfully used the issue of Brexit to divide working class people.

Boris Johnson falsely posed as the friend of ordinary people who had been belittled and ignored after the 2016 vote to leave the European Union (EU).

He claimed to oppose the elitism and privilege that was squashing their voices.

But he could do this only because there were many forces that were indeed trying to reverse the vote.

These included the Liberal Democrats and big business bosses. But most importantly, under pressure from Keir Starmer as well as some of its left, the Labour Party also embraced the demand for a second referendum.

This was not some passing episode that has been forgotten now that Britain has left the EU. Brexit has become a symbol for all the ways that ordinary people are despised and lied to.

And having Starmer, the man who wanted to reverse Brexit, as Labour leader constantly reminds some workers of the insult he delivered.

In addition electoral loyalties are now far thinner. Last week the Tories were celebrating. Less than two years previously, in the European Parliament elections held across Britain, they received just 8.8 percent of the vote.

Ukip and the Brexit Party soared to huge successes and are now thankfully extinguished.

Labour won 40 percent of the vote in 2017’s general election, and only 32 percent two years later.

### Significance

None of this is to underplay the significance of what’s happened. But sections of workers have always voted Tory.

In the 1880s the great majority of workers voted for the openly capitalist Liberal Party. Even after the first battles to set up a Labour Party at the beginning of the twentieth century most workers still voted Tory or Liberal.

The working class was won to more of a sense of class solidarity—and as a by-product voting for Labour—by three waves of struggle. They involved mass strikes, militant protests and socialist agitation.

The first was in the late 1880s and the 1890s. The second was from 1910 to 1926. The third was in the 1930s and during the Second World War.

Direct class battles made more workers think of themselves as people who have common interests—and sharply different ones to the bosses and the Tories.

In the 1950s and 60s the lack of struggle meant some workers drifted back to voting Tory.

And the great struggles of the 1970s had much less of an effect on voting patterns because between 1964 and 1979 Labour was the party in government for 11 of those 15 years.

The decline in struggle after the defeat of the Miners’ Strike in 1984-5 has had a powerful effect on consciousness.

There are two conclusions that derive from this.

The first is that no manipulation of Brexit, racism or fake economic promises can obliterate the reality of a society where a small minority grab huge amounts of wealth, and ordinary people are systematically robbed.

At some point that reality will burst through to far more people.

The second is that we don’t just wait for that but fight every day for what really matters—more resistance, more socialist agitation and more attempts to counter all the rotten, oppressive ideas that divide us.

Perhaps one product of that will be more Labour votes. But the real gain is in the struggle itself, and the place to build that is in a revolutionary organisation, not Labour.



A MASS protest for Scottish independence in 2019

PICTURE: ANDREW MCGOWAN

# We need mass mobilisations for Scottish independence

by RORY ANDERSON and  
HÉCTOR SIERRA

**PARTIES IN favour of Scottish independence have won a majority in elections for the Scottish parliament.**

The Scottish National Party (SNP) won the most votes in a Scottish parliamentary election ever. By the end of this term, it will have been in office for 19 years.

The pro-independence Scottish Greens also made gains.

Together the SNP and the Greens control 72 of the chamber’s 129 seats.

Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon on Saturday claimed a second referendum on independence was a “matter of fundamental democratic principle”.

Alex Salmond’s Alba Party, launched in March, failed to make a breakthrough with no seats won.

### Transfer

The unionist parties didn’t see their fortunes improve either. In some constituencies, there was a shocking transfer of votes between Labour and Tories depending on who was more likely to challenge the SNP.

This showed how Labour has moved further right under the leadership of Anas Sarwar.

Keir McKechnie is from independence campaign

groups All Under One Banner and Now Scotland.

“The results in Scotland are a huge rejection of Boris Johnson and the Tories,” he told Socialist Worker.

“The key issue was independence and a clear majority has now voted to end the union with Britain.”

Class issues were largely absent in the election campaign.

John Kelly, the EIS-Fela union salaries convener, told Socialist Worker, “Issues such as fire and rehire and attacks by employers have



Nicola Sturgeon

not had coverage in this election. The SNP refused to support my own union over the replacement of lecturers with instructors.”

Pauline Brady, a leading NHS campaigner for a 15 percent pay rise, agreed. “All the main parties are out of touch with the issues working class people face,” she said.

### Pay

Pauline says the SNP’s offer of a 4 percent pay rise for NHS workers “goes no way to restoring the pay NHS staff have lost”.

“Anyone that believes being 3 percent better than a Tory is good enough needs to take a look at themselves.”

Gil, a young activist with Extinction Rebellion in Glasgow, agreed the SNP’s promises are tokenistic.

“The SNP have yet to set out a genuine, well-designed plan to curb emissions and ensure workers and communities reliant upon closed industries are supported,” he said.

Asked about independence, Pauline said, “It needs to be a socialist independence, otherwise the austerity we have felt under Westminster will not improve.”

John agreed, “Scotland can become fairer. However, major change can only come by overturning the rotten system under which we live.

“Societal change will not come from parliament.”

## Don’t leave it to court

**BORIS Johnson reasserted his determination to stop indyref2 last Saturday.**

Nicola Sturgeon declared the SNP will introduce legislation for a referendum.

She said, “If Boris Johnson wants to stop that he would have to go to court.”

This strategy will surrender the initiative to the judiciary.

Even this legal clash is uncertain.

The SNP manifesto only commits the party to push for a referendum when the

pandemic is over.

Asked about the alternative, Keir said, “The key next step is to make sure this majority is urgently mobilised into a mass campaign of demonstrations and protests.

“We need to force Westminster to cave in and exert maximum pressure on the SNP and the Greens to set the date for indyref2 now, not later.”

Rally for Independence—IndyRef2 Now! Saturday 22 May, 1pm, outside the Scottish parliament, Edinburgh. Called by All Under One Banner

# Cops killed Blair Peach then spied on partner

by SIMON BASKETTER

**CELIA STUBBS** last week gave evidence to the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI).

Police killed her partner Blair Peach during a protest against the Nazi National Front in Southall, west London, on 23 April 1979.

Blair was a teacher and a member of the Socialist Workers Party, and just 33 years old when he was killed.

In order to protect a Nazi election rally, cops ran amok in Southall and hundreds of people were injured.

In the aftermath, the police spied on those who tried to get to the truth about how Blair died.

Celia told the inquiry last week that officers “abused their surveillance powers to protect themselves from facing justice”.

She added the “improper surveillance” on her was particularly unpleasant because it took place when she was grieving for Blair.

The spies recorded the names of people who attended Blair’s funeral.

In her written statement she said, “The killing of Blair Peach is an important episode of alleged police misconduct of the most serious kind that remains unresolved.

“I believe my case and the circumstances of my surveillance shed light on a significant aspect of how the police behaved in response to Blair’s killing.

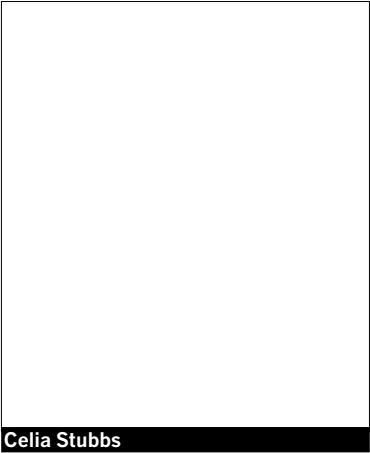
“They wanted to know what I was doing and what others who were helping me were doing, with the obvious inference that they did so to ensure that they stayed one step ahead of our campaign to hold Blair’s killers to account.”

## Distressing

Celia was asked about a spy cop report from 1998 headlined “Touchy Subject”—the code name of an undercover cop—which she said reported on her reluctance to become involved in events to mark the 20th anniversary of Blair’s death.

“I find this very distressing. I find the big anniversaries extremely difficult personally but I did participate.”

She added what the inquiry lawyer forgot to mention. “This was at a meeting at the Colin Roach Centre and the undercover officer was ‘Mark Cassidy’ who had infiltrated our group and was there for five years and had a relationship



Celia Stubbs

with a woman there which caused her terrible distress when she found out who he was.”

A 1979 spy cop report said, “The death of Blair Peach, an active supporter of the Anti-Nazi League, which was a consequence of a violent anti-fascist demonstration in Southall, provided the extreme left-wing with an opportunity to mount a sustained campaign to discredit and criticise the police.”

That is presumably why they spied on Celia and to this day there is a Special Branch file on her and another on Blair which she has not been allowed to see.

She said, “When I received the documents in December 2019, it was extremely upsetting to see this material and to see how the police treated our actions that were law abiding and were simply trying to get to the truth of what happened.

“It seems that they lost all sense of the fact that Blair had been killed by police officers and that our distress about this was criminalised.”

Oddly for all the reports and documents on the campaign for justice there do not seem to be any reports of the Southall demonstration itself.

The Met concealed a report of an internal investigation that said it could “reasonably be concluded that a police officer” struck the blow to the head which killed Blair.

It was finally released in 2010. None of the six cops—Michael Freestone, Anthony Lake, James Scottow, Anthony Richardson, Raymond White and Alan Murray—involved in his murder have ever been charged.



POLICE ARREST anti-Nazi protester in Southall, west London, in 1979

## Hillsborough solicitor advised police to ‘review’ criticism of top officers

A SOLICITOR advised a police officer to review his criticism of senior officers on duty during the Hillsborough football disaster, a court heard last week.

PC Philip Hooson had said he could not “recall at any time any senior officer taking command of the situation or organising anything” during the disaster.

“I know as a matter of fact that certainly did not happen where I was, irrespective of what is now being said,” he added.

The comments did not appear in his final statement after Peter Metcalf advised Hooson that he “may wish to review” them.

Some 96 Liverpool fans died as a result of the 1989 disaster, after a crush in two pens at the Leppings Lane end of the Sheffield stadium.

Former chief superintendent Donald Denton, former detective chief inspector Alan Foster and former solicitor Peter Metcalf are standing trial over their conduct following the disaster.

They are accused of recommending and imposing alterations to police statements. All three deny two counts of perverting the course of justice.

Following the disaster, West Midlands Police (WMP) collected



Hillsborough 1989

statements from South Yorkshire Police officers ahead of an inquiry.

The jury has heard details of more than 30 examples of statements that were reviewed and often amended.

## Reviewing

Another was that of PC Robert House, which had said there were “very few police officers” in the area outside the stadium.

The court heard that Foster asked a detective inspector to see House regarding reviewing the comment or “removing it altogether”. Foster was later informed that House refused to alter the comment.

On Tuesday last week, the court heard that a PC’s account was changed to cut criticism of the cops but criticism of fans was left in.

A line in PC Maxwell Groome’s original statement read, “The control room seemed to have been hit by some sort of paralysis”. It was cut out.

Sarah Whitehouse QC, prosecuting, showed the court a fax from Metcalf to Denton. It said reference to “control room paralysis” was “comment”.

Groome had also claimed that policing at Hillsborough had become “complacent” and said the organisation of the match was “poor”.

All of these remarks had been crossed out and did not appear in a later copy of Groome’s statement that went to WMP.

But two items on the list remained. They included a paragraph relating to drunken fans and fights breaking out in a previous season.

A line that said former match commander chief superintendent Brian Mole had previously walked around the pitch also remained. Yet the words “but this did not happen this year” were deleted.

The court saw notes showing that Groome had objected to signing the statement.

The trial, in Salford, continues. **Sadie Robinson**





# Staff safety fears were ignored in Mexico

A terrible train accident has led to widespread anger—and the threat of a strike by maintenance workers

**A HORRIFIC disaster on Mexico City's metro railway system—with at least 24 people dead and dozens more seriously injured—was long in the making.**

For more than a decade since it opened, people have predicted disaster on the extension of the system—Line 12 or the Golden Line.

Maintenance workers issued over a dozen warnings over the years—which were ignored—and people who lived under the elevated track complained of cracks.

After last week's collapse, it seems the worst of those fears have come true.

A train on the line plunged 50 feet after an overpass collapsed underneath it.

To get to the dead and injured, emergency medical teams and rescue workers scrambled through twisted and burning metal to reach the carriages strewn at steep angles and enmeshed in power cables.

Most of those killed were found already dead at the site.

Meanwhile, hundreds of relatives gathered at the roadside hoping for news of their loved ones.

"I'm looking for my son," Marisol Tapia told reporters. "I can't find him anywhere."

Hours later, her 13 year old son, Brandon, was still missing.

Local residents have been telling anyone who would listen about the cracks in the overhead structure that emerged after a powerful earthquake hit the city in September 2017.

## Avoided

"This could have been avoided," said Homero Zavala, a rail workers' union rep.

"If us workers were really listened to by this administration, a lot of problems would be avoided." Instead, said Zavala, people who raised safety problems faced dismissal.

The huge engineering project cost billions of pounds to complete and was right from the beginning beset by questions of corruption

## BACK STORY

**Since its opening in 2012, successive governments and city mayors willfully ignored the evidence of danger in the hope that Line 12 would become someone else's problem**

●Line 12, which serves working class neighbourhoods in the south east of the city, was a showpiece for the then mayor Marcelo Ebrard. He had rushed to complete it in the hope of enhancing his future career

and corner-cutting. In the first month after opening, there were 60 mechanical failures on trains or tracks. Drivers slowed their trains over elevated sections of the route because even the line's managers feared derailments.

Last month, another one of the city's 12 lines had to shut down after a track fire. And in January a fire at the metro's headquarters killed one person and sent a further 30 to hospital.

There have been so many train collisions that a German rail engineering firm was hired in 2017 to investigate.

Huge political anger at the government of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and Mexico City's mayor, Claudia Sheinbaum is now growing. They are both busily trying to deflect attention by saying no one can be blamed until a "thorough investigation" is completed.

But Marcelo Ebrard, their party chum, is clearly in the firing line.

Already metro workers are planning strikes until safety improvements they have long demanded are implemented.

But the strike may be only the beginning of Mexico City's revenge on those that put them in so great a danger.

THE DERAILED and collapsed train bridge in Mexico City

## NEPAL

# Fear as Covid-19 spreads from India

**INDIA'S COVID-19 crisis is spreading across the border into neighbouring Nepal.**

There are grave fears that the level of infections and deaths in the Himalayan country are at similar levels to those seen in India in the middle of April.

Now Nepalese doctors are worried that their limited health system will also be completely overrun in the coming days and weeks.

"What is happening in India right now is a horrifying preview of Nepal's future if we cannot contain this latest Covid surge that is claiming more lives by the minute," said Dr Netra Prasad Timsina, chair of the Nepal Red

Cross. Across Nepal 44 percent of Covid-19 tests last weekend came back positive.

Health charities are reporting that hospitals in southern towns along the border with India are full to overflowing with Covid-19 patients.

Nepal has fewer doctors per head than India, and so far only around 7 percent of its population has been vaccinated against the virus.

A spokesperson for Nepal's ministry of health said the situation is worsening by the day and "may go out of control in the near future". He pled with richer nations to send more vaccines and help immediately.

A group of Nepalese activists held a protest to demand more measures

## MYANMAR

# Movement moves to more armed conflict

REBEL attacks on Chinese-owned infrastructure in Myanmar are building as the democracy struggle intensifies.

This week fighters attacked part of the 800 mile oil and gas pipeline that links the two countries. The Chinese state politically backs

the military regime that took power in a coup in February. It hopes the dictatorship will keep Myanmar politically close to China. According to Myanmar state TV, pipeline security guards in the Singtaing Township in the Mandalay region were slashed to death by unidentified fighters.

The attack was one of many that have targeted Chinese investments as part of the battle against the military takeover.

This week also saw bomb attacks and targeted killings at regime-owned hospitals in the Yangon, Mandalay and Sagaing regions. Managers and police

informants have been passing information about striking staff to the military. Soldiers then seek to arrest, torture or kill the strikers.

The growing number of assassinations are a further sign that the democracy movement, is increasingly relying on armed struggle methods.



## On other pages...

Tories' lifting of the lockdown is unsafe >>Page 20



## Life after the strike

ENGINEERS WHO have stayed at British Gas are demoralised and unmotivated.

The managers are having constant meetings telling engineers to “turn things around”, increase output, work on and make more sales.

British Gas needs the engineers who stayed to work on and do more and be the people they once were. But they aren't the same people anymore.

British Gas says it promotes carers. It promised in a meeting with the Acas arbitration service to support those who had caring responsibilities with this transition to increased hours.

But those who have written with proof of those responsibilities haven't heard back.

They promised staff they would stop using contractors and now they need to use them more at far greater costs than their own previous workforce.

In addition, British Gas set up a separate company called Local Heros where they have recruited self-employed engineers to take on jobs arranged through British Gas.

They seem to be doing this to get customers who aren't prepared to wait six weeks for an appointment to pay up front.

British Gas take a 20 percent cut of the profits for this service.

Fire and rehire is simply a bully policy and it helps no one. It destroys companies and destroys lives.

**The wife of a British Gas engineer**



## Protests against football bosses show contradictions

TO SEE thousands of football fans on the streets opposing the way the billionaire owners had planned to rig the game and stop the European Super League has been brilliant.

When the Manchester United vs Liverpool game had to be postponed due to the mobilisations it made headlines around the world.

Fans are right to protest. They give huge amounts of money, time and emotion to support their clubs while they are run by a handful who couldn't give a toss.

On social media links between how Manchester United fans were treated by police and how women protesters were attacked at the Sarah Everard vigil were made.

Fans talked about how the police look to cause violence and how the protests at the ground were peaceful until they arrived.

This anger from fans about those at the top should be welcomed. People will resist in numbers on a whole number of issues if they feel protests can win.

This is a revolt against the super rich, it is a response to how every element in our lives is corrupted by the drive for profit.

The term “people power” was used when the elites' plans were defeated in 48 hours. Well done to all those involved for making the bosses sick as a parrot.

**Huw Williams**  
Bristol

● I FEEL that Sam Ord does not explore the contradictions enough in his article Sport and the system—whose game are we playing?(Socialist Worker, 28 April).

His article gives a nod to the value of sport and then a long catalogue as to why sport is bad.

All of it is true. What is more, sport is an extension of our alienated work lives.

In the particular case of football, it is not merely a cross class identification or corporate exploitation.

In the form of local football clubs, it can be an expression of working class identity, albeit contradictory.

**David Gilchrist**  
North London

## A setback for Modi but also the left in India

SOCIALIST WORKER is right to say that the West Bengal election in India was a serious setback for Narendra Modi's BJP party (Socialist Worker, 5 May).

But it was also a disaster for the left, and especially the Communist Party (CPM).

West Bengal has been the strongest base for the left for a century, and was ruled by the CPM between 1977 and 2011.

The Communist Party abandoned any campaigning against the farm and labour laws,

and instead prioritised a BJP defeat over everything.

Its vote fell from 15 percent to just 4 percent as a result.

And it also lost every one of its other seats.

The winner is Mamata Banerjee who is a right wing populist.

That was the candidate of reaction who displaced the CPM when it lost control in 2011.

So the election was certainly bad for Modi, but a mess for the left.

**Barry Pavier**  
Bradford

## Rule will harm victims of trafficking

UNDER NEW rules the brutality of Britain's immigration system reached another level last week.

Already hundreds of vulnerable people, many who have been trafficked, are being detained and threatened with deportation.

The Scottish refugee Council found, “between April 2017 and December 2020, of 5,088 recognised victims of trafficking from outside the EEA, only 260 were granted discretionary leave to remain”.

The treatment meted out by the Home Office is heartless and barbaric. The



experiences of the victims at the hands of the British government is shocking.

And new rules seek to make things even harsher for victims of trafficking. These rules, which come

into force on 25 May, will mean many more survivors will be locked up and threatened with deportation.

Officials will only consider their release if provided with “medical evidence of future harm”.

The British government claims it supports victims of abuse and trafficking. In reality it locks them up and deports them—putting their lives at risk.

We need to continue to raise this issue, support anti-deportation campaigns and tear down Britain's racist immigration system.

**Christine Lewis**  
Leicester

Just a thought...

## Hold Johnson to account

ACCORDING TO the Resolution Foundation think tank, delaying the winter lockdown caused an extra 27,000 Covid-19 deaths.

But people see Boris Johnson as the lovable rogue who was funny on TV show Have I Got News For You.

The problem is, when we do that, we let him get away with actions we wouldn't tolerate if another politician had done the same.

We must hold him to account.

**George Noon**  
Bristol

## Why vote for the Tories?

SADLY IT seems because of big business and the biased media we have a community in the north of England who are voting for the right, not Labour.

Will it be possible to turn around what seems such a big lead for the right?

Something needs to be done.

**Ovid Milton Hooper**  
On Facebook

● SEEMS TO me Labour shouldn't have stood a Remain candidate in Hartlepool where most people voted Leave.

**Bruce**  
On Twitter

## Amazon dodges tax

IT WAS shocking, but unsurprising, to hear Amazon across Europe has sales of over £38 billion but paid absolutely no corporation tax in 2020.

It does while its workers are kept from going to the toilet. And when workers try to organise, Amazon runs bullying anti-union campaigns.

**Emily**  
Plymouth

## Killer cop disputes guilt

TO HEAR that George Floyd's killer Derek Chauvin is seeking a retrial really shows the US justice system for what it is.

A man can murder another on film with witnesses and still dispute that he is guilty.

**Rosie Clarke**  
Glasgow



# HARTLEPOOL AND BEYOND WHAT WENT WRONG WITH LABOUR'S VOTE?

After Labour's disastrous showing in Hartlepool and in many local elections, **Nick Clark** asks why these working class people have turned away from the party

**IT SEEMS the Tories have a better idea of why they won last week's Hartlepool by-election than Labour does. In her victory speech, Hartlepool's new Tory MP Jill Mortimer said, "People voted for that positive change—for jobs and investment."**

Contrast that with what Labour's Steve Reed had to say shortly after the result was announced.

"Keir believes we need to change direction and speed up our movement back towards the British people."

Even Keir Starmer's sympathetic media supporters are starting to wonder what that actually means. But, said Reed, it "will certainly not mean going back to what took us to our historic 85 year defeat in December 2019".

Underlying this is an assumption that working class people in so-called Red Wall areas are "socially conservative". They're defined by a strong sense of "national pride" and "community values" but also motivated by self-interested "aspiration".

Labour MP Khalid Mahmood put it bluntly. "In the past decade, Labour has lost touch with ordinary British people," he said. "A London-based bourgeoisie,

with the support of brigades of woke social media warriors, has effectively captured the party.

"No wonder it is doing better among rich urban liberals and young university graduates than it is amongst the most important part of its traditional electoral coalition, the working class."

Other Labour politicians think the same thing—that people in the north won't vote for Labour because it is too left wing.

The facts don't back this up.

A poll by Channel 4 asked people the main reason why they didn't vote Labour in last week's elections. Only 4 percent said Labour was too left wing and 2 percent that it was "too woke".

"Bad on immigration" came even lower—at 0 percent.

The most popular given reason, at 14 percent, was "Keir Starmer/leadership," while 11 percent said they either didn't agree with Labour's policies or that its policies weren't clear.

More ambiguously, 8 percent of people in the poll said Labour can't be trusted. But this mistrust isn't necessarily right wing and doesn't mean an automatic transfer of support from Labour to the Tories.

In Rotherham, the Tories went from having no councillors to 20. But eight of those came from councillors elected as Ukip in 2016, while three of Labour's losses went to the Liberal Democrats.

In Sunderland, where ten Labour councillors lost their seats, six went to the Tories and four to the Lib Dems.

The Tories have used racism, law and order, migration and nationalism to reel working voters in. In some cases it has worked, but it's not the decisive factor.

Actually in many cases the votes reflect disaffection and frustration



**Keir Starmer's obsession with patriotism isn't winning votes for Labour**

with Labour councils after more than a decade of pushing through cuts on behalf of Tory governments.

That mistrust in Starmer's Labour reflects a longer term problem—the collapse of the party's vote over years, beginning with Tony Blair.

Under Blair and Gordon Brown who followed him, Labour haemorrhaged some five million votes. Its share of the vote fell from 43 percent in 1997 to just 29 percent in 2010. It rose in the 2017 general election then fell back in 2019.

Labour's share of the vote is falling among those on low incomes, and in the most deprived constituencies. These are overwhelmingly in the north and Midlands—areas that bore the brunt of assaults on working class living standards since the late 1970s and never recovered.

They were taken for granted by Blair and Brown, who tried to turn Labour into an explicitly pro-business party that continued to oversee job, wage and

benefits cuts.

Yet this still doesn't explain why some people who may once have voted Labour now appear to be voting Tory.

It's important not to exaggerate this—there isn't a swing to the Tories from Labour on as massive a scale as some would suggest.

In the Hartlepool by-election Labour lost 6,875 votes since 2019, but the Tories only gained 3,660.

## Analyses

We shouldn't assume the Tories' increase came directly from previous Labour voters either. Much of it will have come from the Brexit Party, whose vote fell dramatically from 2019.

So there are at least 3,215 people who voted Labour in 2019 that either went for other parties this time or didn't vote at all—and very likely more.

Analyses of recent general elections show the Tories' vote has increased among unskilled and skilled manual workers, and white collar workers.

This is despite the fact of signs that, in general, people in Britain are to the left of the Tories on most issues.

The annual British Social Attitudes survey consistently shows people's opinions on tax, welfare and public spending are left of the Tories and the Labour right.

A poll of Hartlepool voters ahead of the by-election showed most back spending over austerity, support renationalising Royal Mail, and like the idea of free broadband.

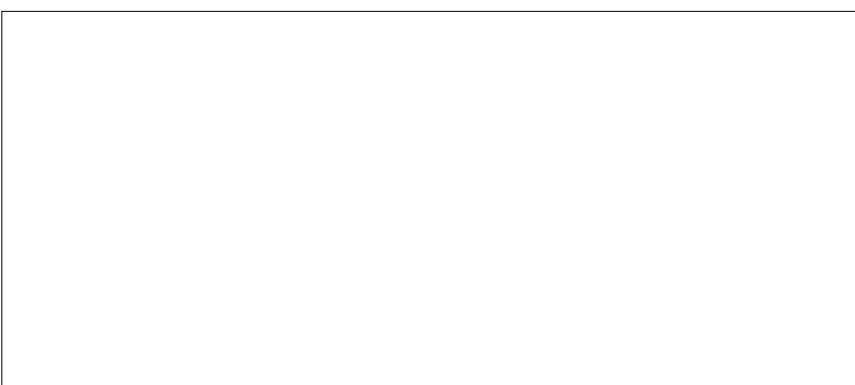
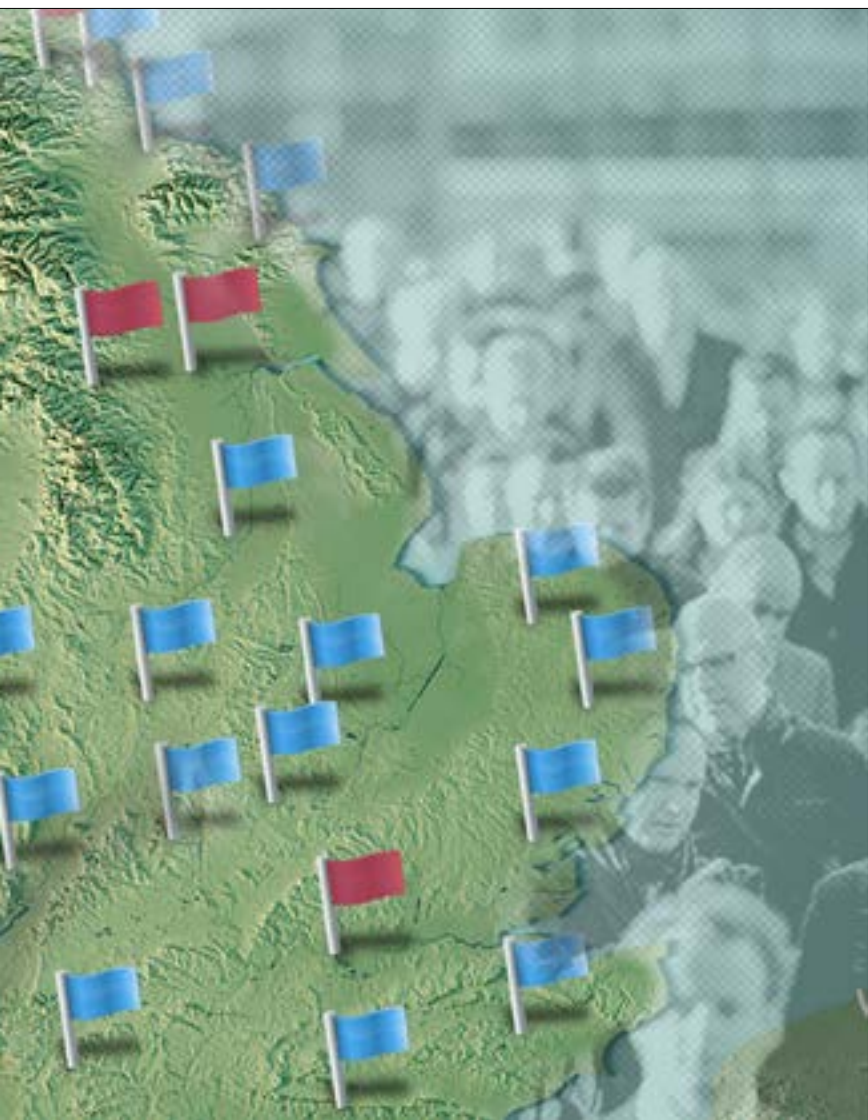
The fact that the Tories won comes down to the fact that—even though they've spent a decade in government—they've presented themselves as a party of change. Meanwhile, Labour looks like more of the same.

Brexit was key to this in 2019. The



**Only 4 percent of those who didn't vote Labour said the party was too left wing**





The Durham Miners' Gala highlights the area's lost traditions

## County Durham

# 'How can a condemned man vote for his executioner?'

LABOUR LOST 16 seats on Durham County Council—and lost control of the council for the first time in just under a century.

But while seven of those seats went to the Tories, the other nine went to Lib Dems, Greens and a variety of independents.

Labour's trouble there began years earlier in 2017, when 23 of its councillors lost their seats. Again, only a minority went to the Tories.

The election came after a bitter battle between the council and teaching assistants (TAs). Labour councillors wanted to fire and rehire them on 23 percent less pay.

Militant and furious strikes by the TAs won them wide support across Durham—and shamed the council.

One teaching assistant told Socialist Worker, "Now I have no one to vote for where I live because the Labour candidate voted against us.

How can a condemned man vote for his executioner?"

She's not the only one. Many people who supported the TAs also felt they couldn't vote Labour because of it.

Dave Lowden, an anti-racist campaigner in Durham, told Socialist Worker, "There are a certain number of people who feel like that.

"Someone on my local Facebook group posted a list of all the people who voted against the TAs and it was all local councillors."

Dave and the TA both said this was just one reason for people in Durham to be angry at the Labour council. Despite austerity, the council is pushing ahead with plans for a new headquarters costing millions of pounds.

As the TA put it, "There's a lot of long lasting anger towards the council."

## Yorkshire

# 'What's Labour done for me?'

ANDY HILES is a former Labour member, and a trade union organiser in South Yorkshire.

He told Socialist Worker that the decline of Labour's vote there "has been slow and painful" and is "a collapse of trust and confidence".

"I map election results for the unions," he said. "Ed Miliband's seat Doncaster North has been a Labour seat for the last 100 years. In 1997 there was a 22,000 majority. Ed was parachuted in in 2005 and won the seat with a 12,000 majority.

"Last year he won it with a 2,000 majority. It's not a sudden collapse,

but it's a few thousand votes at every election.

"And that's not unique to Doncaster North. There's a similar pattern in John Healey's Wentworth and Dearne constituency next door."

Despite this, Andy says the Tory votes in any of these seats haven't rocketed up.

It's not a massive increase in support for the Tories—it's disaffection with Labour.

"After 13 years of Blair the rich get richer and the poor get poorer and the question is, what's Labour done for me?"

## Struggle is the alternative to Labour and the Tories

A CRUCIAL factor behind the Tories' success is that there has been nothing like the scale struggle—strikes and mass protests—needed to stop the decades-long assault on working class people.

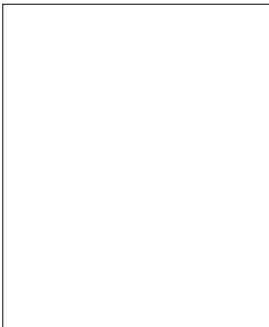
This means that people haven't been protected from the ravages on their jobs, pay and living standards.

It also means that, without the sense that these assaults can

be stopped, many people see no alternative to Labour or the Tories.

Boris Johnson and the Tories have survived their deepest crises and continued winning elections because there's been too little fight to stop them.

If the left and the labour movement want to turn the tide against the Tories, we all have to build that fightback now.



Labour lost control of Durham County Council for the first time in almost 100 years



THE TORIES concentrated on economic issues in the Hartlepool by-election

vote for Brexit in 2016 was strongest in those same northern and Midlands areas where Labour's vote collapsed.

Yet by 2019, Labour's leader Jeremy Corbyn had given in to the right's demands to promise a second referendum. People who had been forgotten, ignored or sneered at delivered a blow against those at the top of society.

Labour spurned them while Boris Johnson—falsely—presented himself as on their side by promising to "get Brexit done."

Now the Tories are building on this with promises of jobs and investment that Labour has failed to deliver.

In Hartlepool, their campaign focussed heavily on the Tory mayor for Tees Valley Ben Houchen. He has promised to buy back Teesside airport, re-develop the site of a former steel-works and took credit for a proposed new "freeport" in the area.

In reality, the freeport will mean more

low paid, insecure jobs. But it's been presented as the change Teesside needs.

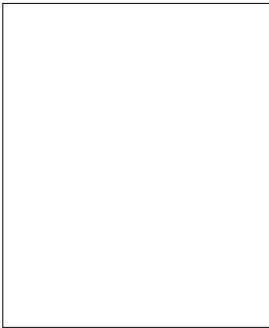
New Tory MP Jill Mortimer says she'll do the same for Hartlepool.

Labour MP Jim MacMahon, who ran the party's campaign, seemed to recognise this. As it became clear the Tories would win he told Sky news, "The Tory offer was compelling.

"Look at the investment in the towns fund, the restoring your railways fund, the freeports. And look what the Tories do when you elect them and the Tories funnel more money towards them."

People may see through the Tories when they fail to deliver what they promise. But there's no guarantee they'll turn back to Labour.

The roots of Labour's crisis lie in decades of assaults on working class people—and its failures to stand up for them.



Andy Hiles, former Labour Party member

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

### INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

### REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

### THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

### INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

### THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602

# Socialist Workers Party online meetings

## Booklaunch

SUPPORTERS OF independence reject Westminster rule

## Breaking up the British state Scotland, independence and fighting for socialism

**BURNLEY & PENDLE**  
Wed 19 May, 7.30pm  
446-409-5118

**HOME COUNTIES**  
Thu 20 May, 6.30pm  
872-4922-1957

**NEWCASTLE**  
Wed 19 May, 7pm  
368-595-2712

**ESSEX**  
Thu 20 May,  
7.30pm  
832-8746-7480

**LONDON: SOUTH**  
Wed 19 May,  
7pm  
497-196-1801

**PORTSMOUTH & SOUTHAMPTON**  
Wed 19 May, 7.30pm  
381-513-5080

**BIRMINGHAM**  
After the Sewell report—how do we beat institutional racism?

Wed 19 May, 7pm  
281-634-5938

**BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE AND STAFFORDSHIRE**  
Anarchism, autonomism, and socialism

Wed 19 May, 7.30pm  
914-9548-1031

**BOURNEMOUTH**  
Is this democracy? Parliament, people and power

Wed 19 May, 7.30pm  
8682-810-8409

**BRADFORD**  
Greed and the Super League—how capitalism is destroying sport

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
885-9187-7552

**BRIGHTON AND HOVE**  
Greed and the Super League—how capitalism is destroying sport

Thu 20 May, 6.30pm  
841-2142-3683

**BRISTOL**  
Greed and the Super League—how capitalism is destroying sport

Thu 20 May, 7.30pm  
688-397-748

**CAMBRIDGE**  
How would socialists deal with a pandemic?

Thu 20 May,  
7.30pm

681-800-4408

**CARDIFF**  
Marxism, nationalism and the struggle for socialism

Wed 19 May,  
7.30pm

630-181-4857

**CHESTERFIELD**  
Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights

Thu 20 May,  
6.30pm

829-532-877

**COVENTRY**  
'By any means necessary'—the revolutionary legacy of Malcolm X

Wed 19 May 7.30pm  
823-945-1917

**CREWE AND STOKE-ON-TRENT**  
Anarchism and socialism—are they different and does it matter?

Wed 19 May,  
7.30pm

883-6483-1263

**DEVON & CORNWALL**  
Biden, imperialism and the neoliberal project

Thu 20 May,  
7.30pm

865-2972-2883

**DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH**  
From anger to revolution—what makes people rise up?

Wed 19 May,  
7.30pm

894-2628-7708

**EAST MIDLANDS**  
Is there a north/south divide?

Wed 19 May, 7pm  
354-874-4790

**EDINBURGH**  
Pamphlet launch: Capitalism and the Politics of Food

Wed 19 May,  
7.30pm

431-459-112

**GLASGOW**  
Indigenous sovereignty and working class struggle in Canada

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
879-2402-3259

**HUDDERSFIELD**  
What's behind the coup in Myanmar?

Wed 19 May,  
6.30pm

290-168-1804

**KENT**  
One year after the murder of George Floyd—racism and resistance

Thu 20 May,  
8.15pm

434-623-8064

**LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE**  
Myanmar—lessons from the struggle against the military

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
992-204-9372

**LEEDS**  
Pamphlet launch: Capitalism and the Politics of Food

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
881-4770-0676

**LIVERPOOL**  
Can Biden bring the US back together?

Wed 19 May,  
7pm

493-925-5919

**LONDON: HACKNEY**  
The Paris Commune of 1871—when workers "stormed heaven"

Thu 20 May,  
7.30pm

854-8245-8715

**LONDON: HARINGEY**  
How would socialists deal with a pandemic?

Wed 19 May,  
7.30pm

459-388-1576

**LONDON: ISLINGTON**  
Why Cop talks have failed to tackle climate change

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
874-012-7970

**LONDON: NEWHAM**  
The environment and the myths of overpopulation

Wed 19 May, 7pm  
288-098-8827

**LONDON: SOUTH EAST**  
Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
529-913-6390

**LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS**  
Is this democracy? Parliament, people and power

Wed 19 May,  
7.30pm

818-391-0420

**LONDON: WEST AND NORTH WEST**  
100 years since Partition—can there be a united Ireland?

Thu 20 May, 7.30pm  
857-8308-2064

**MANCHESTER**  
An introduction to Marxist economics

Wed 19 May, 7.15pm  
323-178-7151

**NORWICH**  
After the Sewell report—how do we beat institutional racism?

Wed 19 May, 7pm  
906-652-5299

**OXFORD AND THAMES VALLEY**  
Power, sleaze and corruption—how do we get rid of the Tories?

Wed 19 May, 7pm  
861-2001-6477

**SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE**  
Big Pharma, the Tories and Covid 19—will the vaccine solve the crisis?

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
528-174-9278

**SWANSEA AND WEST WALES**  
From populism to fascism—how do we defeat the far-right?

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
902-964-963

**WIGAN**  
100 years since Partition—can there be a united Ireland?

Thu 20 May, 7pm  
872-5136-9540

**YORK AND SCARBOROUGH**  
100 years since Partition—can there be a united Ireland?

Wed 19 May,  
7.30pm

827-489-7492



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page [facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty](https://facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty) for news of national online meetings and other updates.

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# A pandemic-era novel that cuts very close to the bone

The End of Men imagines a mystery illness spreading across the globe. The novel is brilliant, says **Sadie Robinson**—and dilemmas raised are all too familiar

**THIS IS a stunning book with an unfortunately horribly familiar theme—how to cope with a deadly pandemic.**

The first inkling of a serious problem comes at a hospital in Glasgow. A couple of men die in quick succession and it isn't really clear why.

Amanda, a doctor at the hospital, recognises that there is a lethal virus that only kills men but can be carried by women. But her warnings are initially ignored—letting the virus spread across the globe.

There are eerie echoes of coronavirus. There is panic as people scramble to adjust to a world where everything must be disinfected, social contact limited, masks worn, and so on. The book is great at describing the awful impact on individuals.

Catherine is living in London with her husband Anthony and son Theodore when the pandemic hits. She loses both of them. The description of how this happens, and her long-term grief that follows, is heartbreaking.

The book gets across how class shapes the impact of the pandemic, using characters in different countries in wildly different circumstances.

What it also does really well is to investigate what the disappearance of the majority of men would actually mean. For instance, some resistance movements initially make gains because there aren't the state forces available to contain them. Armies and police forces are collapsing.

Women have to retrain in numerous different roles to keep many sectors of society going.

## Moral

There are moral questions and dilemmas that don't have easy answers. Newborn male babies are removed from their mothers and kept in a sterile environment, until hopefully a vaccine is found.

The forcible removal of the children, done without the mothers' prior knowledge, sounds barbaric. But then again, it also means their children will live.

Laws force some people deemed safe to house boys and try and shield them from the plague—with the threat of jail if they refuse. Is this a necessary act of force to try and save humanity, or is it a trashing of civil liberties?

Christina Sweeney-Baird has created a riveting novel full of difficult questions and fascinating characters. For people who have lost loved ones during the actual pandemic, this could be too hard a read. But for anyone who won't find it too anxiety-provoking, I definitely recommend it.

**The End of Men**

by Christina Sweeney-Baird is out now



DR DAVID Olusoga explains how slavery and the development of vaccines are intertwined

## The long history of racism and vaccines

### DOCUMENTARY

**EXTRA LIFE—A SHORT HISTORY OF LIVING LONGER**

First episode starts 10:05pm, Tues 18 May, BBC4 and then on BBC Iplayer

EXTRA LIFE explores previous global pandemics to learn lessons in the fight against Covid-19.

The first episode focuses on smallpox, how vaccinations were developed to beat it and why this can help a global inoculation programme.

Early forms of vaccination—variolation—were practiced in Africa and brought to America by a slave, Onesimus, who had undergone an operation to preserve him from smallpox.

This practice was rejected by scientists in America because it undermined the notion that white

people were superior to their black slaves. Yet when British aristocrat Lady Mary Montague witnessed the same procedure in Ottoman Turkey, the practice's popularity swelled.

Historian David Olusoga notes that this was “the beginning of health inequality”.

British scientist Edward Jenner, credited for the smallpox vaccine, actually built on a longer history of variolation originating in 16th century Asia and Africa.

Jenner actually tested on his gardener's eight-year-old son.

And when former US president Thomas Jefferson rolled out his vaccination programme, it was his slaves he used as guinea pigs.

The documentary compares this power imbalance to vaccine hesitancy today. Extra Life examines how legitimate

fears among black people of governments and big business are used by conspiracy theorists to spread online misinformation.

And it looks at how wealthy countries are able to grab enough vaccines for double or treble their population size, while the poorest go without.

It calls on Big Pharma “to not put profits first all the time” because unless everyone is vaccinated the virus will continue to mutate.

By viewing the global smallpox inoculation programme with somewhat rose tinted glasses, the experts conclude that governments can mobilise together.

But that would mean overcoming the priority of profit that drives competition.

**Isabel Ringrose**

### FILM

**MONSTER**

Out now on Netflix

THIS MOVIE premiered in 2018 at the Sundance Film Festival, and is now available on Netflix.

Kelvin Harris Jr stars as 17-year-old honours student Steve Harmon.

Steve has the world ahead of him.

But that comes crashing down when he's charged with felony murder.

The film follows him as he battles for his life in the court system.

### FILM

**JOHNNY MNEMONIC**

Out now on Digital Platforms

ON ITS 25th anniversary, this early Keanu Reeves action film is getting a digital re-release.

Reeves plays a futuristic



Reeves in Johnny Mnemonic

data carrier with an 80GB storage capacity in his brain.

This ahead-of-its time sci-fi thriller set in 2021 is a precursor to blockbusters such as The Matrix and Inception.

## What's on at Bookmarks

The socialist bookshop

**Breaking up the British State**

Scotland, independence and socialism



**Online booklaunch**

6:30pm, Friday 4 June

Watch at [bit.ly/BreakBritishState](https://bit.ly/BreakBritishState)

**P**ABLO Iglesias, founder and leader of what was once seen as the brightest hope for radical change in Europe, resigned from politics last week.

His decision came after humiliation for his Podemos party in the elections in the Spanish capital, Madrid.

Iglesias had stepped down as deputy prime minister to head up the Podemos campaign in the city. But the voting saw a surge in support for the right-wing People's Party (PP) and gains for the far right Vox party.

"We have failed, we fell far short of the mark," Iglesias said. "I am abandoning all my positions, I am leaving politics, if one means by that professional politics. I will continue serving my country."

Iglesias' exit brings to an end seven years of his central involvement in a political project that emerged from an inspiring wave of struggle.

As governments tried to impose austerity on the back of the 2008 financial crisis, huge movements of resistance swept the country.

The 15-M "Indignados" movement saw the occupations of city squares by hundreds of thousands of people and a ferment of discussion and debate. People confronted the attacks on their living standards but also began discussing how to create a new and more democratic form of politics.

They demanded an alternative to the neoliberal governments of both the PP and the Labour-type PSOE party.

### Revolution

There were also strong strikes including a general strike in 2012 over attacks on workers' rights, evictions and cuts in key services.

Tens of millions struck and two million people protested across the country. More general strikes then followed.

Alongside those strikes, many people were also inspired by the revolution in Egypt in 2011. The spread of the Arab Spring showed people that change from below, on the streets, was a possibility.

Podemos grew from these movements attracting tens of thousands of members within the first few days of its foundation in 2014.

Just four months after it was launched, it took 8 percent of the vote across Spain and won five seats in the European parliament.

It was part of a rising tide of political movements that challenged the old parties of social democracy that had implemented austerity or offered only austerity-lite as an alternative.

These included Syriza in Greece and the Front de Gauche in France. The same mood was to swell the Bernie Sanders campaign in the United

SUPPORTERS OF the Spanish radical movement Podemos at an anti-austerity protest in 2015

# PODEMOS TRAPPED BY SYSTEM

Radical left party Podemos sought to be an alternative to the corrupt political establishment but came to mirror its features. **Sam Ord** says hope for change in the Spanish state lies on organising outside of elections

Pablo Iglesias

States—and Jeremy Corbyn's push to lead Labour.

Podemos consciously aligned itself with the leaders of parties that made up South and Central America's "Pink Tide", such as Bolivia's Evo Morales.

Iglesias and the other founders of Podemos produced a programme that had some radical demands.

It stressed democratic public ownership, measures to tackle poverty, and a basic income for everyone.



**The stampede toward elections and parliament grew stronger**

Podemos also called for leaving the Nato nuclear alliance, supporting self-determination for the Catalan and Basque people and rejecting imperialist wars.

The party also claimed to be attempting a new form of politics. Its structures were based on circles and assemblies with direct democracy, transparency, accountability and election candidates selected by the members.

Any movement on the

streets that seeks to have a political expression faces quick decisions.

Is the political voice primarily focused on elections, or are elections simply a subordinate part of growing and developing the movement?

After some equivocation, Podemos made clear that its central focus was going to be the electoral field.

And it also said that it did not consider itself a party of the left. Instead it said that it was mobilising all of those who felt oppressed and exploited by the elite at the top of society.

This flowed into a reluctance to challenge key elements of the state and traditional institutions. It accepted both the monarchy and the importance of the military.

**N 2015 Iglesias highlighted that Podemos didn't want to "stay trapped within the traditional framework of the far left".**

He added that if they claimed to be republicans it, "straight away alienates large sectors of the population who, no matter what they think about other issues, and despite their identifying the previous king with the corruption of the old regime, feel sympathetic towards this new one."

Almost immediately after its 2014 European election success, Podemos started to water down its programme. It abandoned calls for a 35-hour working week and retirement at 60.

This created tensions with the party's socialist factions and trade unionists at a time when many Spanish unions were launching strikes, and protests continued.

The strength of the protests, and the genuine enthusiasm for the idea of a party like Podemos, meant that it could still win impressive votes.

### Coalition

In the December 2015 parliamentary elections, Podemos achieved 21 percent of the vote and finished third. The mainstream socialist PSOE party approached Podemos to form a coalition government.

But Podemos refused, not wanting to combine itself with the representatives of the old, corrupt politics.

Nevertheless the stampede towards elections and parliament became even stronger.

Tellingly, Iglesias said in 2016, "That idiocy that we used to say when we were on the extreme left that things change in the street and not in institutions, is a lie."

This was a significant shift with Podemos turning its back on the mass mobilisations.

Podemos activists became predominantly campaigners for votes who would largely wait until elections to try and make progressive changes. The party's members and voters weren't



seen as active participants who were centrally involved in mobilising on the streets or in workplaces.

And to go with this retreat, the internal organisation began to change too.

The party was increasingly controlled from the top down and started to lose connection with the grassroots activists. The next move was to try and become more respectable and enter government.

Podemos joined a left wing electoral coalition consisting of the Spanish Green Party and other organisations, including the Communist Party of Spain.

Despite previously refusing to join the PSOE after previous elections, it formed a coalition government with it in 2019.

To make this possible Podemos abandoned more of its progressive policies such as support for Catalan self-determination.

The coalition with PSOE ended the right wing's rule. But this came at the cost of Podemos abandoning the radicalism that had flowed from the 2011 movement.

The coalition government made some minor reforms. But its overall record is disastrous.

Like others, it has prioritised the needs of big business over the health of the population.

Spain has seen 3.55 million infections and almost 80,000 deaths in a country of 42 million people. That's a record that is little better than Boris Johnson's in Britain.

## Prisoners

Nine Catalan nationalist political prisoners remain in jail, charged with organising protests in 2017 that were peaceful.

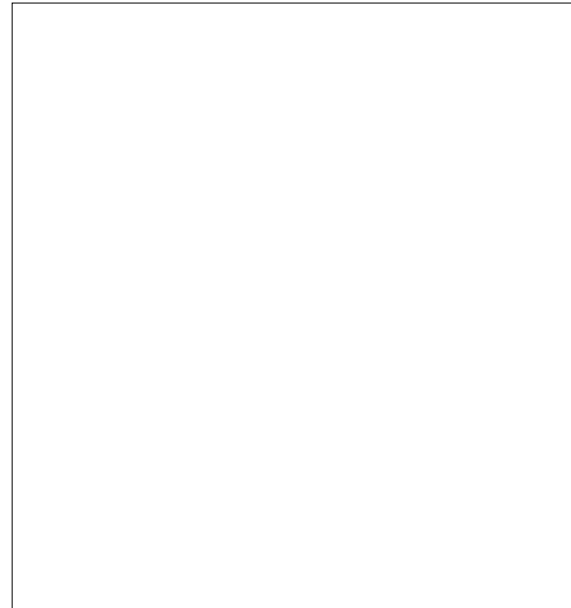
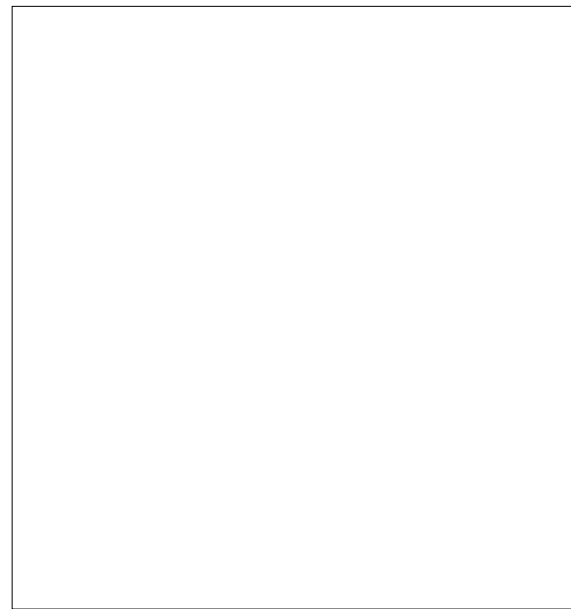
As the party marked its fifth anniversary in 2019, another of its founders, Inigo Errejon announced he would be running as the candidate for a new formation in the Madrid regional elections.

But unfortunately he wanted to stand on an even more moderate platform.

Podemos now faces severe challenges following Iglesias' departure.

It is important that the lessons from this experience are taken alongside the betrayals and retreats of Syriza, the sidelining of Bernie Sanders and the failure of Corbynism.

Although issues inside parliament matter, the movement on the streets and struggles in



**Striking workers join a protest march in Madrid in 2012 (top) Danger on the right (above) Supporters of the far right Vox party rallying in 2019**

workplaces are the key places to fight for socialism.

Podemos was at its best in the beginning, when it related to, and for a time partially expressed, elements of the movements on the streets.

It is a tragedy that such vibrant resistance was increasingly channelled into a mark two version of the social democratic parties that it had pledged to abolish.

Spain remains in a deep political crisis.

New movements of resistance will arise and new challenges to the right and far right have to be built.

As Iglesias steps aside, the urgent need is to learn from his failures and to refocus on revolutionary politics that are firmly based on the movements from below.

## READ MORE

● **Podemos—In the Name of the People** by Chantal Mouffe, Inigo Errejon  
Published by Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, £10  
● **Podemos, Catalonia and the workers' movement in the Spanish state** by Héctor Sierra  
[bit.ly/podemosisj](http://bit.ly/podemosisj)

● **Reform or Revolution and The Mass Strike** by Rosa Luxemburg  
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## FOCUS ON IRELAND

# The impact of imperialism and sectarianism today

**Continuing division in Northern Ireland is a product of how the peace process was conducted by those at the top, writes Simon Basketter**

TORY PRIME minister John Major was asked in 1993 if his government would talk to Irish Republicans.

He replied, "The thought would turn my stomach." At the time his government was holding secret talks with the IRA.

Tory Northern Ireland secretary Peter Brooke had announced in 1990, "The British government has no selfish or strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland. Britain's purpose is not to occupy, oppress or exploit."

While the second sentence was a lie the first had truth in it. The industries that had encouraged the British to cling to a part of Ireland were in decline.

The sectarian state it had created was a cost rather than a benefit. The army had probably learnt all it was going to about torture and counter-insurgency. And the resistance of the IRA, supported by many Catholics, had not been crushed.

This pushed some Unionist politicians into accepting peace talks with Sinn Féin as part of the process. It was a torturous process.

Repeatedly people took to the streets to push the process forward when establishment politicians were blocking it.

But by 1998 a deal was done, which Tony Blair took credit for.

Northern Ireland became trapped in the peace process.

The peace was not based on drawing ordinary Protestants and Catholics together, but on policing people apart and dividing them politically on sectarian lines.

The way that politics and society in Northern Ireland are organised makes it seem "common sense" to blame the "other side". This helps hold back anyone questioning inequality within their "own" side. So Northern Irish



**ONE OF the many 'peace walls' that cut through Belfast, Northern Ireland**

PICTURE: JENNIFER BOYER

Assembly members have to declare themselves Unionists or Nationalists or others.

The government is formed with parity between Unionists and Nationalists, the others are ignored.

Unionists accepted the need for limited accommodation with Catholics because they wanted to make Northern Ireland "stable" for big business. But the parties of unionism were built on vicious anti-Catholic sectarianism.

And radical republicans have become government ministers responsible for jointly running a failed state.

## Dividend

From New Labour neoliberalism to Tory austerity there wasn't a "peace dividend" for ordinary people. Politicians have met crises with lurches to sectarianism.

The Stormont Assembly has collapsed a few times before, lacking any alternative, it restarts. Each time it brought parity of esteem on increasing privatisation and cutting both the public sector and tax on profits.

Sectarianism is not inherent. It was created and fostered from the outside, but it hasn't gone away.



**Sectarianism is not inherent. It was created and fostered from the outside**

Peace came with its own walls—literally. There are over 100 peace walls—or more accurately segregation walls—stretching over 20 miles, more than during the Troubles.

There is continued segregation in Northern Ireland's education system—92.5 percent of pupils are in segregated schools.

On either side of the Shankill Road/Springfield Road peace wall in west Belfast, two thirds of pupils living in the predominately Catholic side and 70 percent in the predominately Protestant side did not get five GCSEs or an equivalent qualification.

Rates of late teens not in education or employment are up to 17 percent in some areas. At least one in five children living in around half the parliamentary constituencies were in relative poverty in 2019.

That rose to more than a quarter (26 percent) in Belfast West, Belfast North and Foyle constituencies. At a ward level that rises to over more than a third of children in some areas.

Managers make still 20 percent more and workers earn 10 percent less than in Britain.

The peace process pushed Protestant workers down to an equality of poverty.

For a genuinely radical solution to the problems created by capitalism and imperialism, workers must unite through struggle and opposition to sectarianism.

This is the fourth in a series of articles on the partition of Ireland. Read our full coverage at [bit.ly/SWPartition100](http://bit.ly/SWPartition100)

# Fear of resistance sees Palestine election pulled

by NICK CLARK

**CAUGHT IN a three-way stand-off with a jailed resistance fighter and an exiled chief torturer, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas dived for cover.**

The three represent the fractured sides of a Palestinian national liberation movement long ago co-opted by the Israeli occupation.

They'd been set to face off in Palestinian elections—the first in nearly 15 years—when Abbas announced the vote must be postponed.

His official explanation was that Israel refused to guarantee it would allow Palestinians in East Jerusalem to vote.

Yet Abbas knew this when he called the elections—and earlier this year had denied he planned on postponing or cancelling them.

## Crisis

His real reason for halting the vote is almost certainly to do with the crisis in his own party, Fatah.

Support for a breakaway faction backed by jailed

resistance hero Marwan Barghouti threatened him.

A Palestinian opinion poll showed overwhelmingly that most people thought Fatah should choose Barghouti rather than Abbas in presidential elections set for June.

And if Barghouti stood independently he would beat Abbas and the candidate of resistance group Hamas.

That reflects anger among Palestinians at Fatah's failure to challenge Israel's occupation.

The poll also shows that many Palestinians think the Palestinian Authority's negotiations with Israel have failed, and reject the two-state solution.

Fatah is the leading party in the Palestine Liberation Organisation that once waged armed resistance against Israel.

Yet since the 1993 Oslo Accords—a supposed peace deal—it has sought negotiations with Israel in return for the promise of a Palestinian state.

This tied it into helping to contain and police Palestinian resistance, while Israel

extended its control over occupied Palestinian land.

The Palestinian Authority last held elections in 2006. Hamas, which promised to keep fighting the occupation, beat Fatah.

## Coup

Fatah—backed by Israel and the US—rejected the results and attempted a coup against Hamas. Hamas was left in control of the Gaza Strip—under siege by Israel.

More than a decade of siege pushed Hamas towards deals with rulers of states such as Egypt, which “mediates” between it and Israel.

Hamas has also shown signs of preparing to compromise with Israel.

That's why Abbas hoped the elections would deliver a coalition or deal with Hamas and the return of negotiations.

Joe Biden's election as US president was a turning point.

Former president Donald Trump threw out the pretence of aiming for any kind of Palestinian state.

Abbas was pushed into ending cooperation and talks

with Israel.

Now Abbas hopes Biden's election can restart the sham peace process that he relies on.

But Israel and some US allies in the Middle East prefer his exiled rival, multimillionaire Mohamed Dahlan.

Dahlan was in charge of the failed coup attempt against Hamas, and oversaw the torture of Hamas members.

His ruthless reputation and close relationships with Arab rulers make him their preferred choice to lead the Palestinian Authority.

But it also means his rival list of candidates to challenge Abbas's has little support among Palestinians.

The real challenge to all of them came from a third Fatah list. It's led by the nephew of Yasser Arafat, hailed as a hero among many Palestinians. And it's backed by Barghouti.

Instead of talks and negotiations, Barghouti calls for ending cooperation with Israel and a return to resistance.

Support for that position is the real challenge to Abbas, Dahlan, Israel and the US.

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# Mental health made worse in pandemic by class and poverty

Depression and poor mental health have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Sadie Robinson explores a new report that shows how class affects people's health and lives

 DEPRESSION HAS soared during the pandemic—and if you're poorer, younger, female or disabled you're much more likely to have been affected.

A report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) last week looked at depression among adults in Britain in the first quarter of the year.

It revealed starkly how money and class shape the quality of people's lives.

One in five adults, 21 percent, suffered some form of depression between January and March this year.

That's more than double the 10 percent figure before the pandemic. It's also an increase from November, when the figure was 19 percent.

A series of measures show that poorer people are much more likely to suffer depression than the rich.

Working age adults whose gross income is under £10,000 a year had the highest rates of depressive symptoms of all income groups.

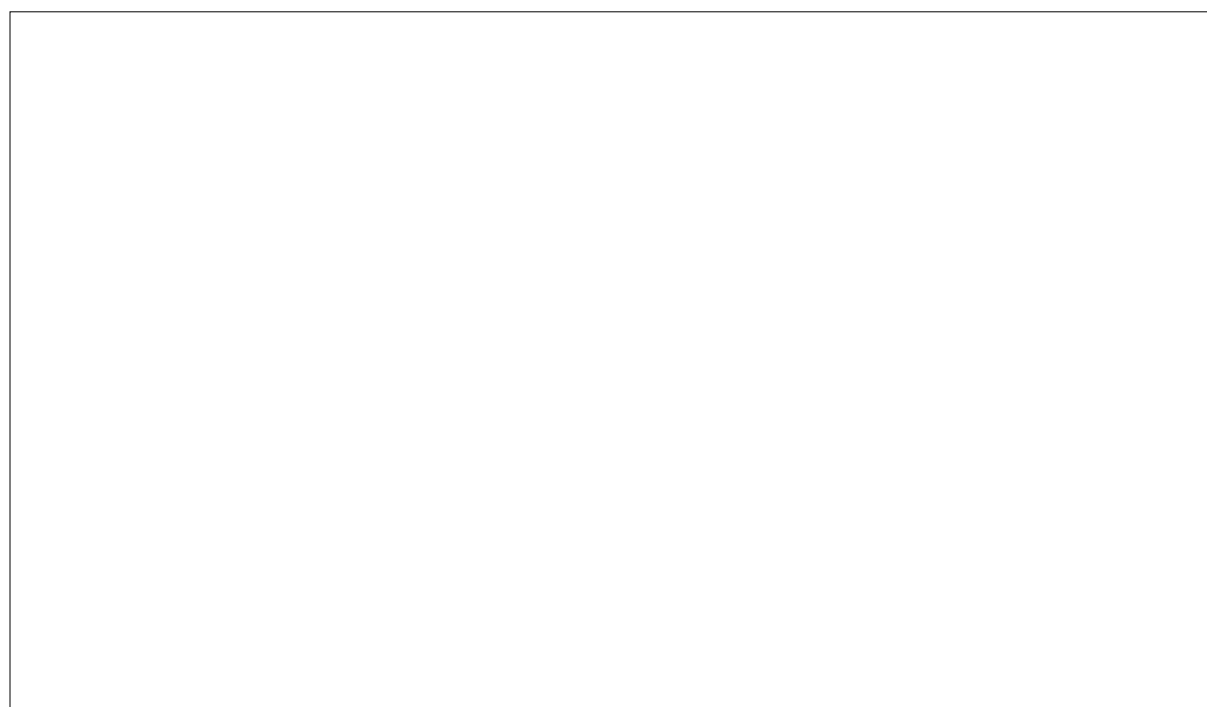
Some 37 percent, or nearly four in ten, had suffered depression early this year. The figure for those earning £50,000 a year or more was one in ten.

## Symptoms

Around 28 percent of adults living in the poorest areas of England suffer depressive symptoms—while 17 percent of those in the richest do.

And 35 percent of adults who couldn't afford an unexpected expense of £850 had suffered depression, compared to 21 percent before the pandemic.

For those who could afford it, the rate was 13 percent—compared with 5 percent previously.



THE NUMBER of adults suffering from depression has risen during the latest lockdown

A massive 40 percent of unemployed adults experienced depression in early 2021, in comparison to 19 percent of employed or self-employed people.

And those classed as “economically inactive” for reasons other than retirement had similar rates to unemployed workers.

Renters had “the highest proportion of depressive symptoms when compared with all other tenure groups”.

Some 37 percent of renters reported depression, yet adults who own their home outright had the

lowest rate at 13 percent. The biggest rises in rates of depressive symptoms took place among younger adults and people living with a child under 16 years old.

Before the pandemic 11 percent of adults aged between 16 and 39 reported depressive symptoms.

This year that rose by almost three times to 29 percent.

Adults aged between 16 and 29 had the highest odds of suffering depression of all age groups.

Clinical psychologist Dr Marianne Trent said the figures show “the brutal psychological fallout of the

pandemic”.


“Once again young adults, whose jobs were often the first to go as many work in retail or hospitality, have been the hardest hit emotionally,” she said.

Trent said “money worries” and “economic uncertainty” are feeding depression, along with increased isolation.

“We are social beings and get a great deal of our self-soothing from being around others,” she added.

“With this being impossible for much of the past year, anxiety and depression will rise.”


## Women more likely to suffer

 WOMEN were more likely to experience some form of depression than men, across all age groups.

A staggering 43 percent of women between 16 and 29 suffered depressive symptoms compared with 26 percent of men of the same age.

Symptoms reported include lack of energy, poor appetite, sleeping problems, and feeling hopeless.


## Highest odds for disabled people

 NEARLY four in ten disabled adults suffered depression in early 2021—three times more than adults without disabilities.

The ONS said disabled adults “had some of the highest odds of experiencing some form of depression”.

And 31 percent of clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) adults experienced depression, compared to 20 percent of non-CEV adults.

# Cuts cause chaos and misery for vulnerable in need

 CUTS TO council funding and key services has left vulnerable people without the care they need—often meaning that problems get worse.

One in four people currently have to wait over three months to access mental health services.

Lack of support and mental health problems can also send other issues, such as addictions, spiralling.

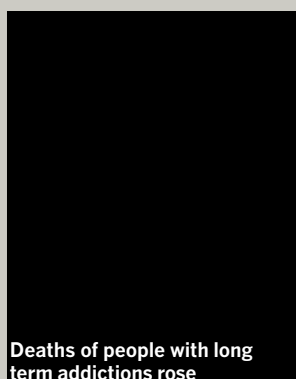
ONS figures last week showed that

alcohol killed more people with conditions associated with alcohol in England and Wales last year than in any of the previous 20 years.

The 7,423 deaths from alcohol misuse last year represented a 20 percent rise on 2019 figures.

And deaths rose from March last year, when the first national lockdown was imposed.

Once again, the poorest are most at risk. Men living in the most deprived areas of England were four times more likely to die



from alcohol than those living in the richest areas. Cuts in other areas

have also created more mental health problems.

Support has been snatched from adults with care and support needs who desperately need it.

A recent survey by campaign group Social Care Future found that this has caused “huge distress”.

Some 81 percent of 250 respondents had faced cuts in packages or increased charges during the pandemic.

Charges meant some people had to stop care they needed, relying more


on family members. One person told the group that their three daily care calls were cut to one a day for seven weeks.

They didn't get dressed for this time, as there would be no carer to put them into night clothes later in the day.

Another was unable to go outside because there was no carer to take them.

The survey found that the cuts were linked to “high levels of deteriorating mental health, including suicidal thoughts”.

## Number visiting GP decreases

 FEWER adults have gone to GPs throughout the pandemic reporting symptoms of depression, despite the ONS findings.

Stephen Buckley from mental health charity Mind said this could be “because they're concerned about placing extra pressure on the NHS”.

“This is worrying because left untreated, mental health problems become more difficult to treat.”

# Bus drivers angry after strikes end in let down over pay

Strikes by London bus workers have ended after an offer was made to workers that many felt wasn't good enough, reports **Sam Ord**

**A LONG-RUNNING bus dispute of three subsidiaries of multinational RATP in west and south London has ended following London United drivers' vote to accept an offer.**

Drivers narrowly accepted an offer of a 2.25 percent pay rise over two years and a one off payment of £400 for 2020.

Pay increases from 2019 and 2020 will also be backdated. This works out to be an extra £2.65 for every eight-hour shift.

In addition, members now have a transfer agreement that will protect their conditions if they wish to move within the company and between RATP subsidiaries.

The offer was accepted by 696 votes and 639 against. That means a significant number of workers are not happy with what the company offered.

One driver based at Park Royal told Socialist Worker, "I'm very disappointed.

"We all feel let down by our union, after all we have gone through over the last year or so.

"So many drivers have lost their lives, we lost two drivers from our

garage at Park Royal." Socialist Worker learnt of critical moments where the Unite union's half-hearted actions let drivers down.

"The union sold us out when they cancelled the first strike at other RATP branches, London Sovereign and Quality Line," one driver said.

Originally all three branches struck together but Unite allowed them to be separated.

In March London Sovereign drivers accepted a poor offer of a tiny pay rise of just 0.25 percent and Quality Line drivers accepted a 0.5 percent offer.

The longer strike at London United garages forced a better offer than other RATP subsidiaries but that still wasn't good enough.

One driver added, "If you work out drivers' pay rise in the last ten years, we have only managed to get a raise less than £5.

## Hard

"The union should have allowed us to hit the company hard, going on an all-out strike.

"We have lost so much. On my route, we have much longer duties with some drivers working almost 50 hours a week. It's unsafe.

"Having seen so many senior drivers leaving the industry, or being forced to leave, I think most drivers have lost all faith in our union."

Drivers for bus operator Metrolink in London have voted overwhelmingly for strikes if bosses don't scrap the controversial remote sign-on policy.

This dispute involves over 4,000 drivers who are members of the same union. They must learn the lessons of this strike.

More militant actions can achieve the demands that bus drivers deserve.



DRIVERS ON strike

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

## Atkinson cops 'colluded' court hears

by ISABEL RINGROSE

**THE TWO** West Mercia police officers, on trial over the death of former footballer Dalian Atkinson in August 2016, have been accused of "collusion".

Benjamin Monk has been charged with murder and manslaughter and Mary Ellen Bettley-Smith of assault in Shropshire.

Both deny all charges.

Prosecutor Alexandra Healy QC said that Monk claimed in his first interview to have kicked Atkinson only once on the left shoulder.

She said, "The evidence of what other officers heard him

say at the scene shows that he knew full well that he had kicked him in the head."

Bettley-Smith, who the jury has heard was in a relationship with Monk at the time, has also been accused of backing his change in story.

Two independent pathologists agreed that "the prolonged period of Taser and the kicks to his head made a significant contribution to his death".

Patrick Gibbs QC, representing Monk, asked the jury to consider whether it is realistic or fair to accuse the officer of acting unlawfully.

And Richard Smith QC, representing Bettley-Smith, said

her use of the baton on Atkinson following the Taser was "lawful" and her use of it was "necessary and reasonable".

One neighbour, Jean Jeffrey-Shaw, told the court she heard one of the officers telling Atkinson, "Keep your head down I am not telling you again."

She said Monk preceded to "stamp" on Atkinson.

Another reports to have heard Monk telling Bettley-Smith, "Fucking hit him."

Julia Shilton added she saw Atkinson falling "like a ton of bricks" after being tasered and was then kicked "quite hard" five or six times.

The trial continues.

## Fire engulfs building with Grenfell cladding

A FIRE engulfed part of a 19-storey residential tower block in New Wharf Side, Poplar, in east London last Friday.

The building is partly covered in aluminium composite materials (ACM) cladding.

This is the same cladding that was put on Grenfell Tower, which led to the deaths of 72 people in 2017 after a fire broke out.

This time it was not so disastrous. But it could have been far worse.

The blaze needed 125 firefighters and 20 engines to

tackle it, and it's reported that no fire alarms in the building went off until the fire began to spread from the eighth floor.

And two people had to be taken to hospital.

The cause of the fire is not yet known. But witnesses say the fire spread quickly, and over 20 percent of the building is clad in ACM PE panels.

FBU union general secretary Matt Wrack said, "It is extremely alarming to see another high-rise building in the heart of London light up in flames."



The deal contains red flags



Firefighters stopped the spread



## SCHOOLS

# Strikes get rep back as school fights grow

by SADIE ROBINSON

**SUSPENDED NEU union rep Louise Lewis has been reinstated following a series of strikes at North Huddersfield Trust School.**

As a number of NEU reps face victimisation the result shows that fighting back can win. Louise was suspended on 1 October last year after raising concerns about coronavirus health and safety.

NEU members at the school have held four days of strikes to demand her reinstatement.

Mike Foster from Huddersfield Trades Council said the result is “a complete vindication of the NEU’s position in mobilising its members to show solidarity”.

He called for an “independent inquiry” into why head teacher Andrew Fell “spent so long pursuing a dedicated teacher and union rep”.

In another sign of the fightback, parents and supporters at **Moulsecroft Primary** in Brighton physically prevented the CEO of the Pioneer Academy chain entering the building.

There has been a long



BLOCKING AN academy boss at Moulsecroft primary

battle against plans for an academy. Meanwhile school workers across Britain are fighting an onslaught of attacks on their conditions and right to organise.

NEU members at **Oaks Park School** in Redbridge, east London, are fighting to defend union rep Keiran Mahon. Bosses sacked Keiran after he encouraged workers to use Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act to protect their safety. The

union had accused bosses of “bullying” workers in January by refusing to let them work from home.

It said workers were forced to deliver online lessons in school, even if they were pregnant or disabled.

A campaign forced the school to change its position.

But now activists are being targeted. NEU members at the school voted in favour of strikes to defend Keiran in an indicative ballot. The

union has called a rally on Wednesday 19 May.

NEU members at **Beal High School**, also in Redbridge, struck last week over a two-tier sickness policy. It follows a two-day walkout the previous week and a one-day strike last month.

Workers at **Leaways school** in Hackney, east London, began a two-day strike on Tuesday following several walkouts to defend their union rep.

Ian Forsythe was sacked after workers started organising in the NEU.

School staff, and local campaigners, are determined to stop the union-busting campaign by Kedleston, which runs the school. They have called a solidarity protest on Saturday 22 May.

Meanwhile NASUWT union members at a school in Cheltenham are staging strikes over conditions and the head’s management style.

Staff at **Greatfield Park Primary School** began a three-day strike on Tuesday, after a two-day walkout last week.

●Messages of support for Keiran Mahon’s reinstatement to [bill.stockwell@neu.org.uk](mailto:bill.stockwell@neu.org.uk)

## JACOB DOUWE EGBERTS



Unity on the picket line

## Coffee workers’ instant hit

“WE’RE AIMING for a knockout in round three, but if we have to go the full 12 rounds then we’re ready.”

Unite union national officer Joe Clarke reflected the determined mood of workers at the JDE coffee plant in Banbury. They held a 24-hour strike on Saturday in a fight against attacks on pay, shift patterns and pensions.

On Friday, Unite’s talks with JDE broke down with the employer refusing to withdraw the “fire and rehire” notice to 291 workers.

The strike was solid, and despite the rain the protest was larger than last week’s

demonstration. It was hard to hear the speakers at the rally due to the constant din of local motorists beeping their support as they drove by.

“People are so angry at the way they’ve been treated—I’ve never seen this workplace so united,” one worker said.

A JDE spokesman admitted to the Banbury Guardian newspaper, “We are not producing coffee today.”

Round two is another 24-hour strike from 7am next Saturday, 15 May, and the third round of action escalates to a 72-hour strike from Wednesday 26 May.

Pat Carmody

## CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

## DVLA pickets stand firm

**STRIKERS AT the Driver, and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) defied bosses’ threats and kept up pickets during their four-day walkout last week.**

Bosses at the DVLA headquarters in Swansea threatened to call the cops on pickets on the fourth day of the strike last Friday.

But workers stood firm. The strikers, members of the PCS union, are demanding that bosses allow more of them to work from home. Bosses have forced almost 2,000 of them to keep working on site, despite more than 600 workers testing positive for

coronavirus since September.

PCS DVLA branch secretary Sophia Wickstead told an online strike rally, “Members have come out in force and made it bigger with more of an impact than the last.”

“This time we picketed—to show our faces and be proud of what we are standing for.”

“This was the first time picketing for most of the reps, and what a liberating experience it was.”

●Donate to the strike fund. Account name Fighting Fund Levy, account number 20331490, sort code 60-83-01, reference DVLA. Solidarity messages to [dvla@pcs.org.uk](mailto:dvla@pcs.org.uk)

## OBITUARY

## Ian Gregory 1953-2021

COMRADES were saddened to hear of the passing of Ian Gregory after a short illness with cancer.

He will be fondly remembered in Sheffield and London by the many comrades whose lives he touched.

He found his political home while on strike at Jewel Razors in Sheffield in the early 1980s. A proud working class person, he went on to education at Northern College and Sheffield University.

He then utilised his skills as a fitter—particularly keeping the Socialist Worker print presses working long past their sell-by date.

Ian was a gentle giant, funny, smiling and articulate.

He was never afraid to get stuck in when required in the fight against the fascists.

Arrested and cuffed while protesting against the racist headteacher Ray Honeyford in the mid-1980s, he had



Ian Gregory

no shortages of witnesses.

The police lied in court but we did better and he was acquitted.

He was badly attacked by the fascists in Bethnal Green, east London. But this did not stop his courage, resolve or the matter of fact determination that he would need again in his final days.

Generous, optimistic and with a love of life, Motown and dancing, Ian will live in the hearts and minds of many.

Condolences to Kate, Brendon, Declan and his sister Denise.  
**Trevor Goodfield and Bea Kay, Sheffield SWP**

## PEACEHAVEN SCHOOL

## Resistance to an academy

WORKERS AT Peacehaven Heights Primary School in Sussex struck on Wednesday of last week against a plan to turn the school into an academy.

Parents joined NEU union members for a protest against the plan. Placards read, “Step away from our school” and, “We say no to greed.”

An Interim Executive Board has run the school since 2019. It wants to hand the school over to the Step academy trust. It said it would consult on the plan.

But campaigners say it made a number of decisions without consulting parents.

Students at the school have also held protests.

Parent Caroline Gridley said the council is “not listening” to teachers.”

She added that the council and the board “make decisions that are not in the interests of our children.”

## UNIVERSITIES

## Liverpool and Leicester act

WORKERS AT the University of Liverpool are set to stage three weeks of strikes to defend jobs. The action by nearly 1,300 UCU union members will see walkouts between 24 to 28 May, 1 to 4 June and 7 to 11 June.

Some 84 percent of members who voted backed strikes in a recent ballot.

Bosses had planned to sack up to 47 staff in the faculty of health and life sciences. The threat of action from UCU members meant they have adjusted this to 32. But action continues.

■THE UCU has begun a boycott of Leicester university in protest at bosses’ plans to impose redundancies.

The “greylisting” move encourages people to refuse to attend any conferences at Leicester, apply for any jobs, give lectures or write for any academic journals.

## ROUND-UP

■DRIVERS FOR rideshare app Bolt staged protests last week to demand more protection after their colleague Gabriel Bringye was murdered.

Members of the UPHD branch of the IWGB union were also moved to protest after another Bolt driver, Muhammad Alam, had his car stolen at knifepoint.

Bolt drivers want better protection including a more vigorous process of identifying users of the app.

Bringye’s sister, Renata Bringye, is also a rideshare driver. She said, “I am fighting for justice for Gabriel and for Bolt to implement improved safety measures for drivers so that nobody else has to feel the same pain as we have experienced.”

■NORWICH City Council workers have voted for a fight over pay and conditions.

The Unite union ballot saw 83 percent of workers back strikes on a 90 percent turnout.

Unite and Unison union members are now set to strike over pay and conditions.

Workers have been in dispute with the council since it set up a new company, Norwich City Services Ltd. Those transferring to the company will see their pay and conditions worsen.

■DEVONPORT NAVAL base tugboat crew were set to strike from this Saturday until 19 May over rotas. This follows two previous strikes.

# QUEEN'S SPEECH SHOWS A VICIOUS TORY AGENDA

**THE QUEEN'S** Speech read in parliament on Tuesday unveiled the Tories' plans for future attacks.

They include further repression, targeting migrants and asylum seekers, and building legal support for military killers.

They also include the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill that has been the centre of the recent Kill the Bill protests.

The speech listed what the government plans to make law in the coming year.

## Demolish

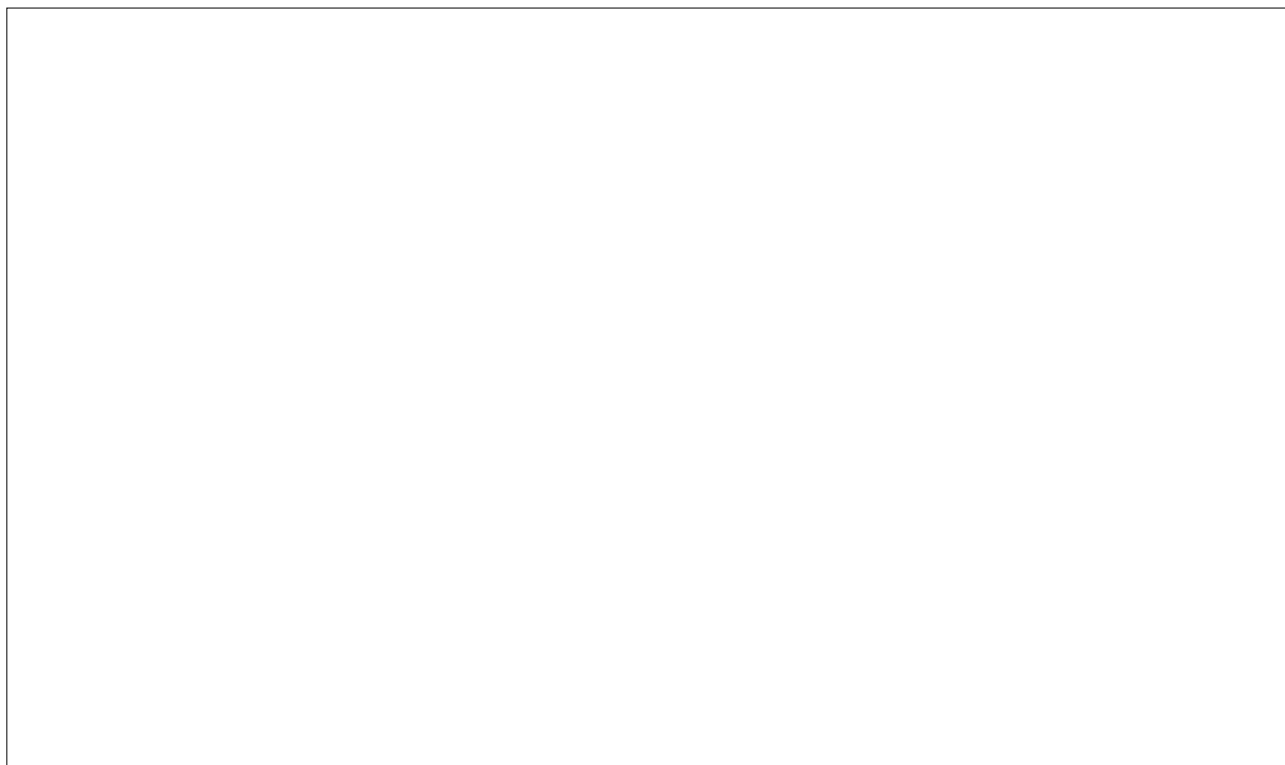
The Tories are set to demolish the rights of refugees they deem to be "illegal".

Home secretary Priti Patel's immigration proposals will "overhaul" Britain's asylum system.

How a refugee enters the country will determine the success of their application. Refugees who cross the Channel or travel through a "safe country" will be removed.

It means more racist and murderous laws.

The speech also outlined bills that are meant to flesh out the Tories' "levelling up"



**THIS WEEK'S** queen's speech is full of vicious attacks on ordinary people

agenda. They included one to create eight new free-ports with fewer restrictions on business. There's no "levelling up" in a Tory Britain where the rich soar ahead.

National security laws will be introduced to make it easier for the state to prosecute alleged Isis supporters returning to Britain.

And prison sentences for terror offences will be made longer. These will be used to scapegoat Muslims.

Democracy will take another hit as photo

identification will be required for voters in general elections.

And there's a bill guaranteeing "free speech in universities" which could allow speakers who are

disinvited to sue for compensation. It will be used against the left and pro-Palestine groups.

The speech mentioned plans to restrict prosecutions of British soldiers who committed crimes in Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

## Criminals

This will extend legislation already passed to protect war criminals to veteran criminals who fought in Northern Ireland.

It seeks to create a permanent legal basis to prevent the sort of investigations that took place after killings in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as those in Ireland.

The police bill is expected to return to the House of Commons on 18 May for the first committee stage hearing.

This is where MPs will examine the bill and can propose amendments.

Further hearings will go on until 24 June when it will return to the full House of Commons for voting.

The bill needs to be opposed in its entirety, and that means stepping up the protests in the streets.

## Britain's Irish war crimes have been covered up

THE government's plan to announce a bar on prosecutions of soldiers who killed in Northern Ireland was due on the same day as the inquest report into the Ballymurphy massacre.

That saw British soldiers kill ten people in 1971.

This was not a coincidence.

The acquittal last week of two soldiers charged with the murder of an Official IRA commander in Belfast in 1972 shows why.

The soldiers admitted shooting the unarmed Joe McCann as he ran.

The judge ruled their



**Protesting for Justice**

confessions couldn't be permitted as evidence because they didn't know it could be used against them.

The state hadn't gathered any other

evidence, so the trial collapsed.

The soldiers were going to argue that they were within the British Army's rules of engagement.

In Northern Ireland in 1972, the British Government, the police, and the British Army denied operating a "shoot to kill" policy.

The soldiers probably could have proved that there was an operating shoot to kill policy against known republicans.

It would highlight the one sided nature of Britain's role.

This is why the British establishment has closed ranks—to ensure that no soldier defends himself in court by arguing that shooting unarmed people was an officially sanctioned policy.

## Government plans for social care are a sham

THERE IS no formal plan to reform social care, despite Boris Johnson's pledge to do so in his first speech as prime minister.

The speech simply said proposals on social care "will be brought forward", with no detail or timetable given.

Johnson said earlier this year it was "highly likely" ministers would bring forward a plan to "fix" problems in the sector in the speech.

But now Michael Gove says ministers were

too busy concentrating on the pandemic and have delayed plans to the end of the year.

This is despite care homes facing horrors during the pandemic.

There will be a health and care bill, but this won't be to pump more money into health services and health workers.

Instead it will mean yet another shake-up of the structures of the NHS by health secretary Matt Hancock. This will aid privatisation.